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your gateway to the esoteric world of PlayStation

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PLAY

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PS3 wallpapers and themes

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Welcome **PLAY**

The UK's best independent PlayStation magazine

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The inmates take over the city

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The legend returns

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ALIENS: COLONIAL MARINES 50
Huge report and interview

Dark knight rises



There were a million different ways I could have gone with this editorial for our *Batman: Arkham City* issue, and when I say a

million I actually mean two.

That's because you're either someone who has played *Batman: Arkham Asylum* or you're not. If you haven't played *Batman: Arkham Asylum*, then good news! *Batman: Arkham City* will seem like the freshest, funnest, other words beginning with f-est game you've played in a long, long time. And if you have played *Arkham Asylum*? This one is even better. We've got the interviews and the hands-on report to tell you exactly why.

You'll also notice that this issue we tracked down the original team behind *Duke Nukem Forever* to find out what they think of the latest version along with *Wipeout* pioneers The Designers Republic. It's part of our drive to come up with fresh, exciting features you won't find anywhere else – look out for a secret look inside the Naughty Dog offices in our next issue as we find out about the changes *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune* went through completely unknown to the world.

In addition to that we're bringing you a huge interview with Gearbox on *Aliens: Colonial Marines*, we get our hands on *Final Fantasy XIII-2*, we see *Metal Gear Solid: HD Collection* after its Konami spit and shine and we test out the *Annihilation* map pack for *Black Ops*. Phew!

Enjoy the issue.

Rhing

Editor

Get in touch!

Let us entertain you during our downtime at work



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You can find us avoiding work at [facebook.com/PlayMagUK](https://www.facebook.com/PlayMagUK). shhhh



YouTube

Lots of trailers and funny stuff I've made at [youtube.com/PlayMagUK](https://www.youtube.com/PlayMagUK)



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RE:PLAY

This month we read some letters and had dispassionate, even jaded reactions to them. It's probably because – when writing them, at least – it was grey and muggy outside. Stupid fake summer

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Vita(I) you import?

I am very annoyed with Sony because I have noticed that UK gamers always get the short straw when it comes to new console releases.

I was watching the Sony Press Conference at E3 and as soon as Kaz Hirai announced the price of the PlayStation Vita I immediately became excited and I started imagining the fun I could be having with the Vita in a few short months, but my celebrations were short-lived. At the Conference, the 3G version of the Vita was announced to be \$299, which after converting to British pounds would cost £181. My excitement reached a colossal level.

But, a few days later I saw a listing on Amazon UK that said that the Vita would cost £275. I just thought that it was a mistake so I went to other major retailers such as Game and Play but their prices were the same. After that enormous disappointment I converted £275 to US dollars and saw that how much the UK is paying is the equivalent of \$456 and I don't understand why it costs so much.

I don't know if I should get the Vita from UK or US retailers. Can you help me?
Sion Jones, North Wales

Console pricing has always been all over the place when it comes to US and European releases, but there are some pertinent factors to take into account. The US price doesn't take into account an individual state's sales tax or other variables that may be added onto it, while the UK price includes all taxes (VAT, basically) from the get-go. Still, buying a US machine from the UK can work out cheaper – you avoid American sales tax and UK VAT, and if the postage is cheap enough you can get a real bargain. Sony doesn't like you importing, though, but who cares – it's your wallet. Vita is Region Free, you'll just need a UK plug or convertor to use the machine over here and it'll be cheaper, so long as you get a reasonable delivery cost and don't get stung with import duty (which can be a lot). Domestic is safer and what you see is what you pay, foreign is potentially cheaper but with more pitfalls. Simple. Ish.

Take it to another dimension

So this 3D malarkey did not interest me one bit. I even talked the whole concept down and said I would not be buying a 3DTV. Well, after an unfortunate incident I fell first into my LCD (I had not been drinking – I was just clumsy) and my TV died. So I upgraded to an LED but due to faults I had to return this and after much deliberation went for a 3DTV. This was purely because the 2D quality was amazing. Anyway, as I had some 3D glasses I thought I would try it out on *Crysis 2*. Now, this game is up its own

3D, yesterday.



backside but I was blown away by the depth and how immersive it is. In an FPS it makes total sense. *Pain* is awesome in 3D and so is *Killzone 3*. I cannot wait for future 3D releases. *Uncharted 3* particularly. I hope more people can adopt to 3DTVs so more developers include a 3D option. In the meantime, though, I have to bow my head in front of family and friends and say I was wrong.

Can Play recommend any other 3D titles?
Regards,
P Jones, Woking

We're still all over the place when it comes to 3D. A quick Play poll says: Chris: "piss", Ryan: "meh", Jon: "squinty", Ian: "painful", Aaron: "irrelevant". So it doesn't look like we're big fans right now. Still, there are impressive experiences, like *Super Stardust HD* and *MotorStorm: Apocalypse*, but right now it's a gimmicky feature in its infancy. Sony is going to push it as much as it can – it has a vested interest to do so – so we're going to be seeing more and more emphasis on 3D gaming. We'll let you know when we're impressed, as well as when our collective headache stops.

We all suffer from this problem

My PS3 game collection has grown larger and larger over the time I've had a PS3, and slowly it's crept up on me that I'm terrible at completing games. At first I didn't think it was a problem, as I still enjoyed games, but eventually I hit a point where I started regarding the story more importantly (I did

THE BURNING ISSUES

The stuff we want to hear about!



MOVE

1

Do you see a future where we'll only be using wagglegame controllers on our games?

2

Does 3D work for you? Have you used it? Will you?

3

Have you ever missed out on a game and come to it years later, to find it's great?



Write in, and win! Every full-length letter we print receives a free game, courtesy of EA. For each letter we included this month, the sender wins a copy of *Shadows Of The Damned*, which is available now for the PS3 (£49.99). Age verification is required.



this: just finish what you want to finish, and never feel pressured to play what you don't want to spend your time with.

Wagglegsticks and wiggly arms

Just writing in to talk a bit about motion controls and how they're used. E3 has just finished and one of the themes we saw, yet again, is the implementation of motion controls.

Now, both Sony and Microsoft pushed their motion controls again, but with completely different approaches it seems. Sony pushed the 'yeah, we have motion controls, but you don't have to use them if you don't want to' stance, backed up by Irrational Games' Ken Levine appearing on stage to talk about

BioShock: Infinite. Microsoft, however, took a different approach by seemingly shoe-horning them in to anything and everything.

Now, I like the fact that Microsoft is supporting Kinect, but I wouldn't want everything having tacked on Kinect support as the quality would diminish. Likewise, I didn't entirely like Sony's approach as it feels as if they aren't supporting it enough, which also worries me.

I was wondering what the guys and gals over at **Play** thought of how motion controls were presented and what way you would want them in games.

Cheers!

Phillip Costigan

First, there's no need to call Chris a 'gal'. Second, we are interested by Move and we're always looking out to see what developers are doing with it next – *BioShock: Infinite* being a surprising and great example of piquing our collective interest. It's just a shame there's pretty much nothing we really want to play with Move, because motion control tends to be lumped in unimaginatively and with little actual thought as to how easy it will be for us to use it. The buggers. As for Kinect? Interesting in theory, boring crap in practice. Voice control? We had that years ago. On PS2. Seriously, we did. Idiots.

before, but now it's a far more important factor in whether I like a game or not than it was). I looked through my collection (I had maybe 15 games back then), and I hadn't completed about eight of them.

This was a while ago, and I've completed most of them. However, since then I've bought a few more, and Sony gave me a whole bunch of free games for not utilising a feature I don't utilise much at all anyway. This means that again, I've got a problem. Whenever I play my PS3, I feel guilty I haven't played some really brilliant games enough (*inFamous*, *Gran Turismo 5*, *Resistance 2*), just because when I want to play them I don't have the time and when I have the time I have something new.

Now I've got all of that confession off of my chest, I was wondering if this is a problem any of the **Play** team have. So, is it?

Conor, Wiltshire

You are talking, of course, of The Stack. The Pile Of Shame. The games you just don't finish. Sorry to break it to you Conor, but it gets worse. As life goes on, as responsibilities get greater and time becomes sparser, The Stack never stops growing. Everyone on the **Play team has numerous games in various states of non-completion, all awaiting the day when we'll go finish them off because we've all said, "I'll go back to it later" at some point. It's an endless cycle. It's always the same. We wish there were enough hours in the day, days in the week, weeks in the year and years in our lives to finish them all, but there just isn't. The best advice we can give you is**



PLAY

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@DuvalMagic

Comment re: looking at DNF for narrative depth: "It's like Rolling Stone magazine trying to find a deep meaningful message in a Ke\$ha song."

@PlayMag_UK says: Gearbox's Randy Pitchford makes a point.



Mass Effect 3 demo?

Call this 'The 11th Thing You Didn't Know About Mass Effect Which Didn't Quite Make The List Below' but Casey Hudson has told fans on Twitter "stay tuned for news on demo plans in a few months." We're wise men, so let's say rumoured multiplayer will be revealed and the demo will be based on that.



Green Lantern joins DC Universe Online

Sony has announced the first paid for DLC for its *DC Universe Online* MMO, which will be *Fight For The Light*. As the headline has given away, it will focus on Green Lantern. It will also add a 'construct' layer to the combat, keeping in line with the character's powers.



360 changed Uncharted

Xbox's success turned *Uncharted* from a 'fantasy' slant to a gritty shooter. "The big push from Sony was to craft games for PS3 that were more realistic... the pressure from Xbox's success with gritty shooters was a very real force on our direction at that time," says ex-dev Don Poole. Full feature next month.



Mass Effect 3

10 things you didn't know

Executive producer Casey Hudson sits down with Play and shares some juicy info on the Mass Effect series, including the forthcoming final chapter of the trilogy...

1 There was uncertainty during development of the original Mass Effect

"The only time there would have been any uncertainty [completing the trilogy on one generation of consoles] was during development of the first *Mass Effect* game. It's hard to make the promise of doing a whole series of games, when you don't yet know it will be successful or popular."

2 Mass Effect 3 has been planned since the beginning

"The high-level themes and events have been planned since the beginning. But *Mass Effect 3* really stands alone as its own story – starting with Commander Shepard on the Earth, and ending with a spectacular and definitive conclusion."

3 Mass Effect 3 will begin on Earth

"*Mass Effect 3* will be an even better place to start [than *Mass Effect 2*], since the story literally begins from the most familiar starting point (the Earth), and grows to encompass the biggest-scale events we can possibly imagine."

4 It's all about your savegame

"As you play a *Mass Effect* game, each action you take is recorded and becomes part of your savegame. Then, as writers and designers are planning levels later in the game or in the next game, they can draw from that background and make events and storylines change organically based on what you've done."

5 Mass Effect 3 begins with Mass Effect 2 design

"In *Mass Effect 3*, we're starting with the basic system design of *Mass Effect 2*, but we're adding more powers, options for branching power progression, deeper weapon and armour customisation, and an overall richer game economy ranging from things you find in levels to the high-level strategy of the war effort."

6 'Deeper RPG systems' promised

"We heard the feedback that *Mass Effect 2* players wanted deeper RPG systems and more intelligent decision-making options in customisation."

7 Mass Effect and Mass Effect 2 multiplayer was considered

"Being able to explore and fight alongside your friends in this enormous universe has always been something we thought would be cool, and players have asked for it for a long time as well. In fact, there were times when we were planning a multiplayer component for both the original *Mass Effect* and *Mass Effect 2*."

8 Mass Effect 3 multiplayer no longer being denied

"What we don't want to do – and will never do – is compromise the power of the single-player experience. So while we are interested in multiplayer, we just haven't yet found the right way to do it for the *Mass Effect* universe."

9 Being the final game in the series allows for dramatic conclusions

"*Mass Effect 3* is an opportunity to allow the storyline to diverge as much as we want, where your actions can have more dramatic and shocking results than ever before."

10 Mass Effect 2 on PlayStation 3 was proof of strong design

"First, we need to make sure that if you've played a *Mass Effect* game before, each new game reflects what you've done previously. But second, and at least as important, each game really needs to stand on its own, so that players new to the series can jump in and start their *Mass Effect* experience at that point. We saw this working really well when many players on the PS3 started with *Mass Effect 2*, having never played the first game."

YOUR SHOUT ASSASSIN'S CREED: REVELATIONS

1. **@STRANGER_UK** I can't wait for *Revelations*. The series goes from strength to strength. Hopefully some of our questions get answered.

2. **@CONORRRRRRRRR** Very excited for *Revelations* as I love AC. However, I did think now was the time for a new character... hope Ubi prove me wrong.

3. **@MISSPOISON13** Lookin forward to the multiplayer and storyline... who wouldn't! Hopefully UBI has sorted out the server problems for the multi.

4. **@METALPAUL1000** ACII & AC:B were great games. They need to do something new as I was a little bored 2nd time around. Might not be a day one purchase.

5. **@DANGOUGH7** It looks brilliant, I'm going to count down the days starting today, it's cooler how his beard gets cooler and cooler.

6. **@PAUL_BOWLER** Assassin's Creed has surpassed its repetitive origins, but can *Revelations* eclipse *Brotherhood's* sheer inventive spectacle?

7. **@AWESOMEGUY2400** I think this won't live up to expectations.

facebook .com/playmagazineuk

Alex 'Snottob' Forrester The trailer with Woodkid's *Iron* was gasmic *drool*

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Tony Watson Skelton I'm a bit of a Trophy whore and hated the fact that *Brotherhood* had online Trophies needed to get the Plat. I suppose it's too much to hope that they won't do it in *Revelations*. :(

REASONS WHY... Uncharted: Golden Abyss will sell PSVita

MORE THAN A SPIN-OFF This is no mere pocket version of the great *Uncharted* series. Bend Studios is making a fully fledged Drake adventure set before the events of the console games. Basically Bend is taking its lead from the *God Of War* PSP games.

IT'S PSVITA SMART As with all the games announced for the PSVita so far *Golden Abyss* attempts to take advantage of the interesting features the handheld offers, such as touch screen and tilt control, but you can switch them all off if you want.

twitterwatch

@TheKevinButler

FYI: real gamers call it Call of Duty, not "cod." That's a fish.

@PlayMag_UK says: As ever the Sony VP for telling you what is and isn't a fish is on the ball.

IT'S GOT THE MOVES Naughty Dog apparently opened up its library of animations to Bend Studios so it could make Drake as much like his console incarnation as possible. Around 3,000 animations are thought to have been in the library.

A TALE TO TELL With around two hours of cut-scenes *Uncharted: Golden Abyss* has a proper story, too. Motion capture was recorded using the same facilities as the other *Uncharted* games and Nolan North returns as the fully voiced Nathan Drake.

MISCHIEF IN MIND We've tended to see Drake playing the hero, but we always got the sense he was a bit more playful in his younger days. With an old friend and rival in Jason Dante at his side, this could be a lighter Nathan to the one in *Drake's Deception*.

SSX: Making you a superhero

It's all about "making awesome easy", says EA

As EA works hard to clear up confusion about the direction of its *SSX* reboot, the game's creative director and producer Todd Batty has explained to **Play** how it is making itself different and holding on to the core ideas behind the hugely popular series. In particular, he wanted to distance *SSX* from EA's other extreme sports series *Skate*, saying it is bigger and more over the top, just the way fans want.

"*SSX* for us is not about taking you from being a zero to a hero," Batty insisted. "It's about taking you from being a hero to being a superhero. It's about making you feel awesome right out of the box and having a really approachable learning curve where anyone can

pick up the game and immediately feel great about themselves."

But you need not fear as *SSX* is not becoming a casual experience. "Our working mantra on this game has been 'make awesome easy and then make Oh My God really hard,'" Batty continued. "We've seen in the industry today you've got about five minutes to capture a consumer's attention and so our goal has been that anyone should be able to pick up this game making awesome easy and everything from there is about adding progression and difficulty so the most hardcore of hardcore gamers can still spend hours and hours mastering the game."



WHAT WE WANT TO SEE

What's the PSN missing?
Well, these few things at least

1 Single purchase PSVita games:

With the games revealed and the hardware named, the two concerns on our mind are release date and how many times you need to purchase a game to play it across platforms. We shouldn't need to buy *Ruin* twice to play it on PlayStation 3 and PSVita. Hopefully we won't.

2 Remote downloads:

Assuming PSVita has full access to the PlayStation Store and not just to compatible content, we hope we'll be able to queue up downloads for our PS3 from anywhere thanks to PSVita.



3 Remote messaging:

Much like being able to check out the Store wherever you are, why can't we send messages to our PSN friends from PCs or mobile devices? Not even using the PlayStation app!



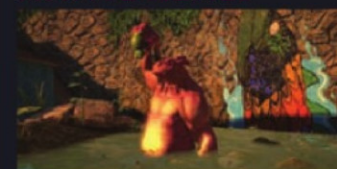
4 Mandatory demos:

There's been some talk of this, but there are still too many games on the PlayStation Store that you can't try before you buy and that's a problem when your wallet can only stretch so far.



5 Home from Home: We're on a bit of a remote kick this month, but while we're on a roll, why not have Home accessible from beyond your PlayStation 3? Would people be more inclined to use it if they can access it from anywhere?

WWWT5 news:

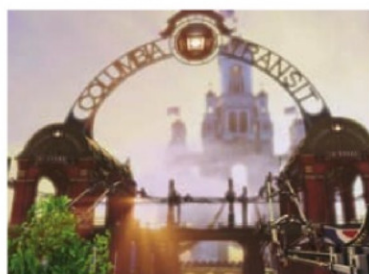


Papo & Yo was revealed around the time of E3 and kind of got lost in all the noise, but it's one of the most promising PSN titles coming to us in 2012. Set in the favelas of South America this is about a boy who must control his frog-addicted friend Monster. Bizarre, but it looks superb.

INSTALL

The influences of BIOSHOCK: INFINITE

Where does Irrational get its wonderful ideas?



Star Wars

In many ways the floating city of Columbia draws two key influences from George Lucas's original trilogy. First is the Cloud City of Bespin in *The Empire Strikes Back*, but given its military uses Ken Levine has also compared it to the Death Star.



Heroes Of Might & Magic

Ken Levine has admitted to being inspired by *Heroes Of Might & Magic*'s upgrade system in the development of Nostrums, *BioShock: Infinite*'s version of tonics. Potluck or unstable Nostrums won't tell you what upgrade you will get until you use them and you have to choose.



Rollercoasters

At one time Irrational considered allowing your character in *BioShock: Infinite* to fly around the game in order to make the best use of the verticality of Columbia. Instead Levine's love of rollercoasters inspired the Sky-line system.



Left 4 Dead

In building Elizabeth and helping to create a new layer of interactivity for *BioShock: Infinite*, Irrational looked at the AI Director system of *Left 4 Dead*, which spontaneously reads your actions and responds so you don't need to give Elizabeth instructions.



The Shining

Moving from the dark, dingy and damp world of Rapture to the bright and colourful Columbia posed a challenge in terms of keeping the game scary. To find the right tone Irrational Games looked at bright, bleached-out horrors like *The Shining* for inspiration.



ON FAN BACKLASH:

“Most of the flak we received early on was based on personal opinion of what we said rather than it being based on the actual game experience. To be honest, until you play the game, you can only express your concerns, which is fair; being judgemental is another thing, however.”

ON BRINGING BACK THE SERIES:

“We started with a blank sheet and the 'simple' task to revive the *Deus Ex* franchise – no pressure! It was nerve-wracking, but, like kids who don't check the water temperature before jumping in the pool, we dove into this adventure with full conviction. We never looked back and today I'm proud of what, as a team, we managed to achieve.”

ON HIS HOPES FOR THE FUTURE:

“I hope people will remember *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* for being one incredibly immersive game that surprised them, made them think about stuff and that made the franchise cool again!”

ON CONCERNS ABOUT THE AI:

“I'd be lying if I said the AI meets all of our expectations, but I think it's normal that every developer has something they'd like to do differently. That being said, when you look at the type of game we're making, where stealth and combat need to cohabit as naturally as possible, I think overall gamers will be satisfied with what we did. It's not perfect, but it makes for interesting gameplay situations.”

STAT ATTACK
43 million
hours spent gaming
per day by UK
public

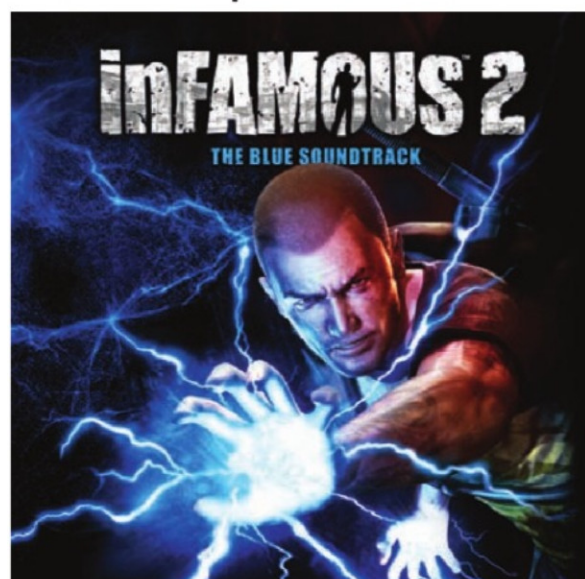
The final days of Deus Ex



Game director Jean-François Dugas speaks candidly about the last moments of *Human Revolution*'s development

WIN inFAMOUS 2 THE BLUE SOUNDTRACK

Three copies of the PS3 exclusive's epic score to be won



Thanks to the fine folks over at Sumthing Else Music Works we've got three exclusive copies of the *inFAMOUS 2* soundtrack up for grabs. With so much attention placed on Cole's powers and user-generated content, the soundtrack didn't get as much love as it deserved. As it happens Jim Dooley, JD Mayer, Galactic, Brain and The Black Heart Procession did a hell of a job. To be in with a chance of winning a copy just answer the following question:

Where does Cole draw his power from?

a) Electricity b) Muffins c) Kittens playing pianos

Keep up to date with all Sumthing Else Music Works' videogame soundtrack releases by following it on:

@SumthingDigital

TERMS AND CONDITIONS All entrants must be 18 years old or over. To submit your answer, simply email play@imaginepublishing.co.uk with the subject line 'inFamous Soundtrack Comp'. Please include your full name, age and address. The closing date for entries is 31 August 2011. Please be aware that answers must be submitted to the above email address only, and any left through the comments section of our website will be automatically disqualified. This competition is open to residents of the United Kingdom and Ireland. Imagine Publishing has the right to substitute the prize for a similar item of equal or higher value. Employees of Imagine Publishing (including freelancers), their relatives, or any agents are not eligible to enter. The editor's decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered into. Prizes cannot be exchanged for cash. Full terms and conditions are available upon request. From time to time, Imagine Publishing or its agents may send you related material or special offers. If you do not want to receive this, please state it clearly on your competition entry.

INSTANT EXPERT

All of the pros with none of the prose



twitterwatch

@jesawyer
"ugh, i'm so tired of sequels in games these days. i want to go back to the good old days of ultima vi, might and magic v, and wizardry vii."

@PlayMag_UK says: Obsidian's project director is clearly fed up with all the sequel-bashing that goes on.

DOS & DON'TS

Important lessons from Play this month



DO: Give *F.E.A.R. 3* a go online. It's got some of the most bizarre and interesting multiplayer modes we've seen in a while.



DON'T: Play *Ape Escape* while Ryan is watching over your shoulder. All he'll do is criticise and mock your ape-catching abilities.



DO: Consider *Transformers* to be back on the bad movie tie-in track again. This is not *War For Cybertron* unfortunately.



DON'T: Play *EDF: Insect Armageddon* if you have a serious fear of bugs. The title kind of gives away the fact there are lots of them.

Read our reviews of all these games starting on page 83

QUESTION

Has Mass Effect 3 lost its RPG roots?

PURISTS IN THE world of role-playing games have become increasingly frustrated and concerned by the development of BioWare's games recently. They're becoming too action orientated some say, but is this true? We take a look at the evidence so far.

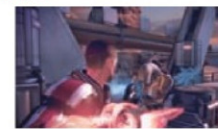
Omni-blade bananas

The introduction of the Omni-Blade and other new melee weapons suggests that there's a renewed focus on up-close action. Stabbing someone in the guts with a glowing sword isn't exactly tactical, is it? The answer you're looking for is no. This is about instant combat gratification.



Get a move on

Shepard's movement in *Mass Effect 3* has been improved so that he/she can move around the game, leap over gaps and barriers and generally be a bit smoother than in previous titles. Why? To speed up his/her movement and make *Mass Effect 3* a better shooter.



Husks get heavy

There have been a lot of images of the new husk forms, many of which are bigger and more powerful than any that we've seen before. Since these guys were never the smartest of enemies, are we basically looking at a bunch of bullet fodder?



But there's customisation

BioWare has promised more customisation options in *Mass Effect 3* than we saw in *Mass Effect 2*. This includes modifying your weapons as well as your armour with real effects and bonuses added depending on your choices.



It's a marketing thing

What promotes a game better – action set pieces or tinkering in sub menus? As much as we love RPGs they don't always make for the most exciting game trailers. In other words, look beyond the hype.



ANSWER:

Will be even more RPG focused than before

Q&A

Final Fantasy XIII-2

Play talks to Final Fantasy XIII-2 director **Motomu Toriyama** (top) and producer **Yoshinori Kitase** about their forthcoming J-RPG...



Why did you feel FFXIII was worthy of its own sequel? Why not just make FFXV?



YK: When developing an FF-numbered title, we always try to build it from scratch in order to create brand-new gameplay without being shackled by any of the previous FF games. Therefore each project requires a long preparation period. With FFXIII-2, we wanted to

tackle the criticism raised about FFXIII. If this is to be achieved, skills of the development staff can improve quickly while the title's quality goes up by one step, too. I hope this experience will be useful when we have an opportunity to develop an FF-numbered title in future.

FFXIII-2 is said to be a darker and more serious game than FFXIII. In what way is it darker, and why did you decide to take this approach following the more lighthearted tone of FFXIII?

MT: For FFXIII, we selected the two gods, Lindsei and Pulse, from the crystal mythology to be placed at the centre of the story and depicted the prosperous lifestyle in the futuristic world of Cocoon. 'Lighthearted' may not be an appropriate term to describe the life of Lightning and her friends as they are branded as Cocoon's enemies and excluded from the society. The serious tone of the story is to remain in FFXIII-2 while the story will unfold against the backdrop of a goddess called Etro, who is sometimes referred to as 'Goddess of Death'. The story is led by some intriguing key words such as 'death' and 'invisible world' and expressed in a darker and more mysterious style than FFXIII.

Will players who didn't play FFXIII still be able to enjoy the story in this sequel?

MT: We plan to build a system at the start of FFXIII-2 where the storyline and universe of FFXIII are described briefly, although the player should definitely be able to enjoy the story of FFXIII-2 with no knowledge of FFXIII because they will follow the story by trying to solve mysteries on more universal themes.

Why did you choose to implement the Live Trigger mechanic?

MT: FFXIII-2 is being developed with the concept of a 'player-driven' game as we aim to enable the player to enjoy more interaction with the game in every aspect. There are lots of parts in FFXIII where all that the player can do is look at the screen, such as scenario, cut-scenes and the like. In contrast, the new game places emphasis on a stronger sense of unity between the player and the character they are playing, which is achieved with the introduction of the choice-making element of Live Trigger. You can choose what to say or what action to take. Such options are made available where we want to invite you to contemplate intriguing questions about the story.

FFXIII-2 features QTEs. Why did you choose to include this feature?

MT: As part of the concept of a 'player-driven' game, the player will be allowed to enter action commands during a rendered battle scene so that cut-scenes can do more than simply showing some action. This is called Cinematic Action and will mainly be available in boss battles. When you defeat a powerful enemy, it will help you enjoy a sense of fulfilment and exhilaration.

Some players criticised the first FFXIII for taking too long to get into the real meat of the game, saying that the opening 12 hours felt like a tutorial. How have you remedied that problem here?

MT: The battle system of FFXIII is to remain but it will be an upgraded version. We are designing the game in such a way to allow the player to learn about the system naturally in the course of the gameplay. In FFXIII, free missions were not unlocked until the second half of the story, whereas many missions are available from the beginning of FFXIII-2 so that you can play them freely depending on how proficient you are with the game.

Players also criticised FFXIII for being too linear, with levels feeling too much like corridors. How have you attempted to make FFXIII less linear and more open?

MT: Whereas FFXIII was meant to be a 'story-driven' game where gameplay was led powerfully by the story, in the sequel, you can freely explore different parts of the story as you make progress in the game. Each level is designed with many loopholes and boss battles can be played in various ways rather than looking for one particular strategy you need to execute to be successful.

Do you feel that, in development of FFXIII-2, you've been tailoring the experience towards Western gamers as well as Eastern gamers?

MT: When a new FF title is developed, we never design the game by keeping Japan and worldwide separated in our consciousness. FF stories always have universal charm that can appeal to anyone in the world because each one has its own original universe and revolves around human drama.

How have you further evolved and refined the combat in FFXIII-2? Are you willing to further discuss the monster recruitment element?

MT: The battle system of FFXIII was speedy and highly strategic. It therefore was received very well by fans and the basic mechanics are to remain in FFXIII-2, ATB which allows you to enter several commands as well as Paradigm Shift. We'll be revealing more info for the monster recruitment element further down the line although I'm sure you'll be pleased to hear what we have to say.

Are you considering bringing the Fabula Nova Crystallis universe to PSVita at all?

YK: Although we haven't announced any projects at the moment I personally think that PSVita is a unique and extremely attractive platform.



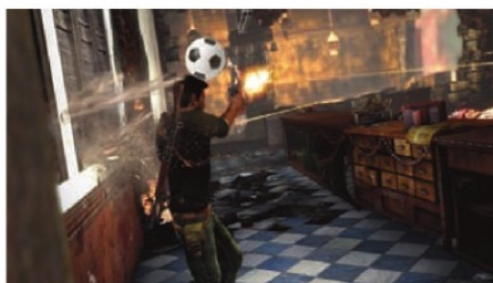
Born-again gaming

Square Enix president Yoichi Wada wants reboots, we offer some suggestions

It's been said before by Square Enix, but it was recently re-confirmed by president Yoichi Wada: it's a company all about the reboots. *Tomb Raider* is the first of likely many, and with Square Enix being a company with so many properties to draw from we thought we'd come up with a few suggestions of series in need of a reboot – and what that could entail...



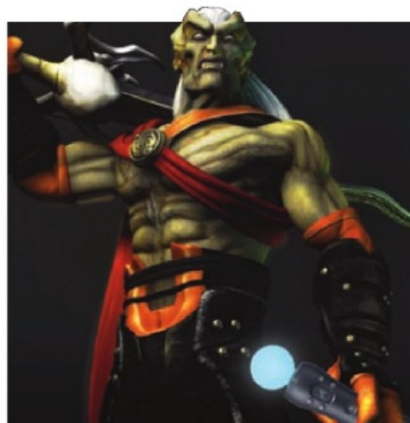
Dragon Quest: The 'let's take inspiration from *Dragon Age*' reboot?



Championship Manager: The third-person shooter reboot?



Kingdom Hearts: The 'no popular Disney characters whatsoever' reboot?



Legacy Of Kain: The Move-controlled *Harry Potter*-inspired reboot?



The Bouncer: The literal simulation of being a bouncer reboot?

Imagine launches Android Magazine



Imagine Publishing isn't just responsible for Play magazine but also publishes *games™*, *Retro Gamer* and *X360* (boo!). And now, Imagine Publishing will also be responsible for *Android Magazine*, a hot new launch dedicated to everything Android.

Android Magazine will offer tutorial sections written by experts on setting up your phone, customising, configuring and even hacking if you want to get the most from your Android rather than just setting a cloudy wallpaper and not doing anything else with your phone.

You'll just have to take our word for it that the guys who write this magazine are pros and we know because we work in the same office as them. If it was us, we'd say "buy *Hot Springs Story*" which wouldn't really make for much of a magazine. So if you have an Android phone, buy *Android Magazine*.



hot or not? MEMORY MONITOR

OnLive

Streaming games over the internet, meaning you only ever need to fork out for one console (if that) and can never be out of date technologically. This actually exists right now. Rumblings that OnLive was chatting with Sony recently has only made us speculate more on the future of PlayStation and cloud gaming.



Cross-platform play

PS Vita looks to take this functionality to a level only tentatively explored with PSP. Play your games on the move, transfer them over to PS3, pick up where you left off. It has to be specifically coded into games, though, so it's unlikely to take over the world.

Physical cards

Ah, the past. Sony didn't actually invent the memory card, as some claim, but it did popularise the concept. We still use them in phones and handheld consoles, but they're slowly making way for the online, cloud-based generation. We'll still have them hanging around for a few years to come, mind.



Cloud saving

Sony struck a deal with Valve to use Steam on PS3 – not long after, cloud saving was introduced for PS Plus users. A similar system is in play on the home computer version of Steam. Its usefulness doesn't apply to everyone, but those who use it swear by the system.



INSTALL

A November (and October) to remember

Over the space of around 19 days, from the end of October to partway through November, we will see the release of five of the biggest games this year. *Battlefield 3*, *Uncharted 3*, *Modern Warfare 3*, *The Elder Scrolls: Skyrim* and *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* will all be vying for both your time and money. But you don't have unlimited time or money, so which should you invest in? Well, thanks to the miracle of science, **Play** is able to help you out with our deep, psychological... flowchart... thingy. Follow the path best suited to you and find your ideal game for 2011's Month Of Madness.





PS Vita Revealed

Sony shows off its all-new, high definition replacement for the PSP. NowGamer's there to test the hardware and the games. Read the verdict here.

- Hands-on with the tech
- Interview with PS Vita boss Michael Denny
- Uncharted: Golden Abyss hands on preview

Most Viewed

Today Week Month

- Gran Turismo 5: The 12 Best Cars (Multi)
- Call Of Duty Black Ops: Weapon Guide (Multi)
- GTA 5: Rockstar Deal Seals 2012 Release - Analyst (Multi)
- MW3: Spec Ops Survival 'Different To Zombies Mode' (Multi)
- F1 2011 (Xbox 360) exclusive preview (Xbox)



Latest Reviews



NOW Gamer 2.0 Launches

Groundbreaking videogame website levels up with new HD content

Our sister site NowGamer.com has taken things to the next level as it launches NowGamer 2.0, a completely upgraded and streamlined gaming website experience. As part of this major relaunch NowGamer.com will be pushing the highest quality HD video and imagery as well as video content for all its reviews, previews and features.

"I'm incredibly excited about the launch of NowGamer 2.0," Editor in Chief and former **Play** champion Nick Jones told us. "From an editorial point of view it enables us to provide even better games coverage than we could before and we've also got some great new tech in here that will enable us to be flexible in the future in how we present that content."

One of the major additions to the site is much more social networking functionality so you can get involved

with the NowGamer team and have your say on the latest news, reviews and issues on the site. You'll even see your discussions with the NowGamer team published on the homepage.

"I felt that we'd gone as far as we could with the old site and it was time for a refresh," Nick Jones explained. "We kept the things that worked and got rid of the things that didn't. We then looked at how we could give our readers the best videogames website experience now and in the future. It was also important that we were able to provide a platform that will help our partners get their message across to their customers. I'm very pleased with the outcome."

With a massive year of gaming ahead NowGamer.com is going to be a one-stop shop for all the amazing blockbuster news and reviews, so get over there now.

Latest News



Hot Content By that, we don't mean pictures of Megan Fox posing, we mean breaking news, interviews and sizzling video content as it happens.

Latest Reviews



Lots Of Reviews All the big hitters and reviews of those you haven't heard of. Like this one, *Lume*. What is it? We don't know. It looks stupid. Visit NowGamer for the review!

3 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT... SAINTS ROW THE THIRD



YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHING YET
Giant purple dildos as weapons? Apparently that's the tamer end of the spectrum for Volition's latest OTT sandbox crime adventure. It's warning players that even more ridiculous weapons have yet to be revealed.



IT'S GOT FREAKIN' LASER BEAMS
It's not just the weapons that are going to shock you; so will the range of vehicles. Leaving the cat faced van with a cannon on the back that can suck up and shoot out passers-by to one side, how about a laser-toting jump jet?



WELCOME TO THE REAL WORLD
Whatever sense the other *Saints Row* games may have had that they were set in a real world (and there wasn't much sense of that) has completely gone for *Saint Row: The Third*. Realism is like a dirty word to the team at Volition now.

Charts

Cataloguing everything that's big in the world of PlayStation

PS3 CHART

1		LA Noire Rockstar Some well-timed DLC kept <i>L.A. Noire</i> ticking over just long enough to keep it at the top. 91%
2		Infamous 2 Sony Cole's second coming has proved to be far less divisive than his first outing. 83%
3		Call Of Duty: Black Ops Activision Another DLC addition for <i>Black Ops</i> keeps this juggernaut moving forward. 94%
4		FIFA 11 EA Lots of buzz building around <i>FIFA 12</i> . Hopefully there will be a demo not too far away. 91%
5		Call Of Juarez: The Cartel Ubisoft With all the noise of E3 we had sort of forgotten about <i>Call Of Juarez</i> . Oh well. NA%
6		DiRT 3 Codemasters We don't often see games climb the chart these days, but <i>DiRT 3</i> seems to be going strong. 85%
7		Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows Part 2 EA Unsurprisingly the latest <i>Harry Potter</i> is doing rather well. 37%
8		Duke Nukem Forever 2K Games The Duke may have taken a critical mauling, but he's held on for another month. 33%
9		F.E.A.R. 3 Warner Bros. <i>F.E.A.R.</i> 's multiplayer really seemed to capture imaginations, which explains how it's holding on. 60%
10		UFC Personal Trainer THQ Fitness games on the PS3 are becoming more abundant and are also selling well. 65%

PSP CHART

1		FIFA 11 EA The PSP release schedule is cooling off with the PSVita on the horizon. <i>FIFA 11</i> should hold on till then. 69%
2		Final Fantasy IV: Complete Collection Square Enix Square is the strongest PSP supporter. Will that be true of PSVita? NA%
3		Football Manager 2011 Sega An interesting return back into the chart for Sega's management sim, but a welcome one. NA%
4		Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean Activision Definitely one of the stronger Lego games on the PS3, its PSP following shows no signs of dropping. NA%
5		Dissidia 012 Final Fantasy Square Enix It's a double whammy of <i>Final Fantasy</i> in the chart this month, not for the first time. 79%

*This chart is compiled from sales, our opinions and the games you're playing. If you're playing a recent, quality title that isn't on our chart, head on over to the forum and let us know about it.



COD:MW3 VS. BATTLEFIELD 3

Whoever wins in the (Frames Per) Second World War, it won't matter



Sixty frames per second does matter.

It really does make a difference in fighting games, twitch shooters and some racing games. So it's understandable that those involved in the creation of *Modern Warfare 3* would tout it as one of the bestest positive features of their future Bestselling Game Ever.

But it doesn't matter to other games. It doesn't matter to many, many other genres, but a bit closer to home it certainly doesn't matter to less twitch-based shooters like, for example, *Battlefield 3*. Which is what makes the willy-waving such a pointless exercise. Marketing guff. Chest-beating. My dad can beat up your dad. It's irrelevant.

Yes, 60fps is an advantage and it is an achievement to shout furiously at the world about – to a certain extent – but is it a deal-breaker? Does it mean the competition is somehow failing, by 'losing' 30 refreshes of the screen every second? Absolutely not. It means *Modern Warfare 3* is continuing to do well at what it does well. That's all.

The only things *MW3* and *BF3* have in common is the perspective they're played from and the fact they're both contemporary combat-based man-shooters. They're fundamentally similar, but in practice – to the trained eye – quite different beasts. So for *MW3* to run around screaming about how smoothly it runs bears about as much relevance to what *actually* matters as *BF3* running around screaming about how a proportionally larger number of Swedish people were involved in its creation. **Sixty frames per second does not matter.**



“ You can go out and name your engine and call it whatever you want, right. I've done that before; I've seen that trick and the bottom line is, [*Modern Warfare 3*] will run at 60 frames a second. Not sure any of our competitors will. ”

Glen Schofield, Sledgehammer Games

MODERN WARFARE 3

How many of you will now be placing a pre-order because you know this runs at 60 frames per second? Anyone?

twitterwatch



@jasondeheras

In traditional hack and slash games designing fun means making the selling of the characters' personality the highest priority.

@PlayMag_UK says: *God Of War III* combat designer Jason de Heras offers an insight into great action game design.



“ We are filling the memory up to the max. We are using all the features the machine has, everything from the Blu-ray drive to how we throw things in and out of memory. So from a technical standpoint, we're getting really close to what it's possible to get out of the machine. ”

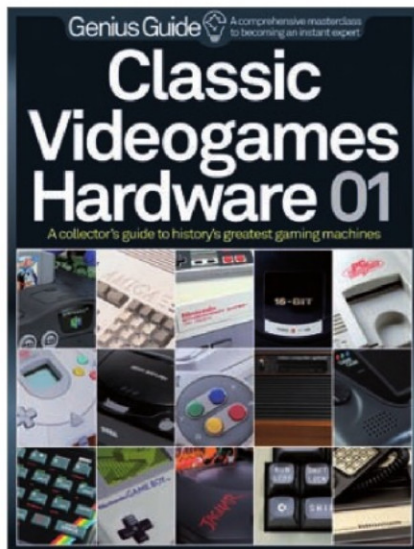
Patrick Bach, DICE

BATTLEFIELD 3

As it's not a twitch shooter, it doesn't need to run at 60 frames per second. It would be nice but it's not essential.

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Classic Videogames Hardware Genius Guide eBook Volume 1

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SRP: £5.81



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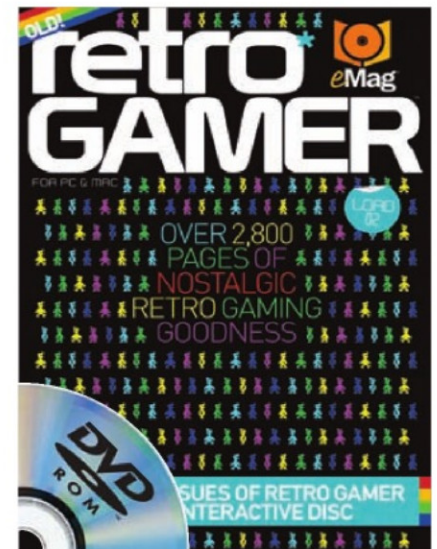
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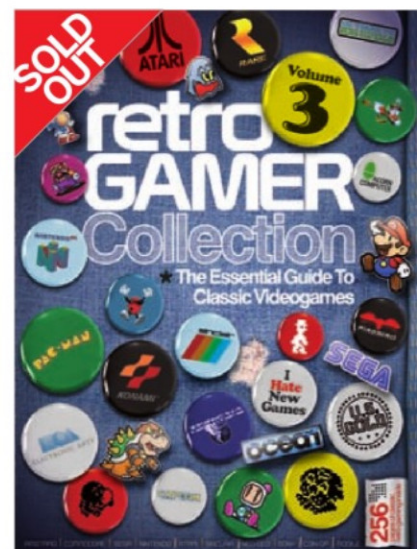
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5 SIDEKICKS

Dependable, trustworthy and loyal (well... most of the time anyway), there's nothing quite like having an NPC to accompany you on your adventures. Here are five of our favourites...

1 WHEATLEY, PORTAL 2

We don't want to spoil too much of *Portal 2* for those that still haven't played it, but we will say that even when Wheatley goes a bit power mad we still couldn't bring ourselves to dislike him. Like a stupid dog, he's too endearingly thick to stay angry at for long. It's all thanks to Stephen Merchant's voice acting. We still can't watch those Barclays ads without thinking of Aperture Science.



2 OTACON, METAL GEAR SOLID

Good old Hal Emmerich (codename Otacon). He's one of the first, and probably only, videogame characters to wet himself mere seconds after being introduced to the player, but we'd probably do that too if a cyborg ninja with a samurai sword was threatening us. He's incredibly unlucky in love, too – he had to watch both Sniper Wolf and Naomi Hunter die. Poor chap.



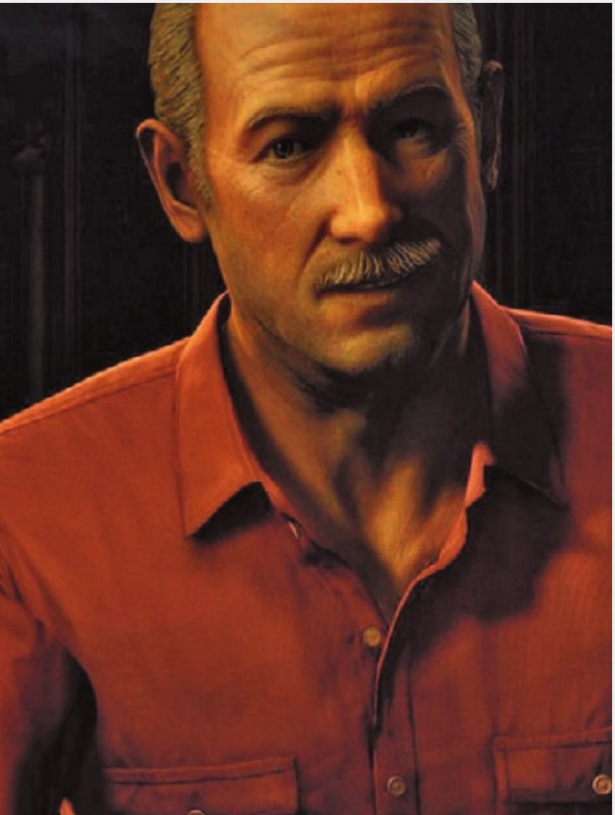
3 ALYX VANCE, HALF-LIFE 2

Alyx Vance is delightful company throughout *Half-Life 2* and its episodes. Valve's success with the character was made clear to us during the opening hours of *Episode Two*, when Alyx is speared by a Hunter. Seeing her injured we actually reached out to the screen and shouted "NO!" She's one of the only videogame sidekicks we've genuinely cared about.



5 AGRO, SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

If you say that Agro is a pet and not a sidekick then you have no soul and will probably die cold and alone. Agro is more than just a way of travelling from point A to point B – he's your only companion in a bleak and deserted world, a friend and loyal ally. Don't deny you felt at least a twinge of sadness when he's cruelly torn away from you at the end of the game.



4 SULLY, UNCHARTED

Videogames are a bit ageist, really. It's not very often old people appear in them as anything other than shrivelled old sages or wizards with beards that tickle their toes. But Victor 'Sully' Sullivan doesn't feel like a cliché, or at least not a videogame cliché. He's the cool uncle; the man who's seen and done it all; the old dude who still carries a Wes-44. We're going to be like that when we grow up.

TEAM PICKS

The Play team chooses their favourite gaming sidekicks



CHRIS



DOGMEAT

If someone tells you that I cried when Dogmeat was killed during my *Fallout 3* playthrough then just ignore them. It's all lies! My eyeballs were just a bit sweaty... honest.



JON



GARRUS

By my side when I needed him and leading the troops in my absence, Garrus was my go-to guy no matter what the challenge ahead in *Mass Effect 2*.



IAN



SWEET CHIN MUSIC

See, I'm being really clever and funny here. Sweet Chin Music is actually a shuffle SIDE KICK. Let's all laugh at how great I am: ha ha ha ha ha ha ahhh.



RYAN



PIGGSY

I like Piggy because he's a fat pervert, like me! That's what I said when asked. But it's not long enough to fill this space. What else is there to say? His name is cool, I guess.

The anatomy of...

SOLID SNAKE

Hahaha, his name sounds like a penis! Right, now we've got that out of the way let's take a mature, considered and insightful look at the man who spearheaded stealth



SNAKE? SNAKE!?! SNAAAAAAKE!?

IQ of 180. Speaks six languages fluently. Has a silly mullet. And yet despite his bad hair Solid Snake has still managed to become the man who can "make the impossible possible". He's faked his own death, averted nuclear catastrophe at least three times, and pretty much single-handedly took down the Patriots. Even when entering a state of accelerated ageing, changing him into an old man in *MGS 4*, he was still an absolute badass. He had a topless fight on top of a floating military installation then crawled through a corridor installed with deadly microwave emitters. That's what we'll be doing when we're OAPs, too.



SMOKIN' ACES

Solid Snake is a heavy smoker. During the first two games he smoked an unfiltered version of Lucky Strikes. By the time he infiltrated Shadow Moses he was smoking Moslems, designed to reduce second-hand smoke. During Ocelot's insurrection he smoked a brand called The Boss, which were unfiltered hand-rolled cigarettes. Snake gave up cigarettes at the end of *MGS 4*. We reckon that's what the whole series is actually about: Solid Snake giving up smoking. It's an inspirational story for us all.



SO SOLID CREW

EastEnders has nothing on the dysfunctional dynamics of the Snake family. Solid Snake, real name David, was born in 1972. He was part of Les Enfants Terribles, a secret cloning project designed to create the perfect soldier using the genes of Big Boss. Although created in a lab Snake was born via surrogate mother EVA, along with his 'brothers' Liquid Snake and Solidus Snake. Solidus Snake inherited the identical genetic code of Big Boss, while Liquid and Solid were modified to receive Big Boss's dominant and recessive genes respectively. There was, to put it lightly, some slight sibling rivalry between the three in the coming years.



SNAKE SECRETS

"Voice actors are usually really fun people to work with and this was no exception," says Jeremy Blaustein, localisation manager of *Metal Gear Solid*. "There were lots of jokes about how 'gay' some of the interchanges between Snake and Otacon were, such as them riding together on the snowmobile and the final scene." Gasp! What?! We've got more from Blaustein in the next issue including who *that* famous voice was inspired by.

BIG BOSSES

Solid Snake has had some colourful adversaries over the years. Here are some of the most memorable

VULCAN RAVEN



When you hear the word 'shaman' you tend to think of peaceful, spiritual human beings practising meditation and healing. You don't picture a seven-foot tank of a man carrying an M61 Vulcan – a gun that's usually attached to the underside of an F-16.

PSYCHO MANTIS



This gas mask-wearing psychotic was capable of entering people's minds and reading their thoughts, as well as lifting objects with the sheer force of will. And yet he was defeated by a PlayStation controller port. He didn't see that one coming, did he?

VAMP



Let's be honest. A fat man on roller skates? A woman with a magnet strapped to her chest? A president? Dead Cell was pretty crap. Vamp was the best of a bad bunch. He totally justified his place in the series in *MGS 4*, during that bloody excellent battle against Raiden.

RAGING RAVEN



Why is Raging Raven our favourite of *MGS 4*'s The Beauty And The Beast Unit? Is it because she's a flying metal raven equipped with vernier rockets, missiles and a grenade launcher? No, it's because she's played by Yumi Kikuchi. She's hot.

INSTALL

{The Vault}

OBJECTS OF DESIRE

The toys, trinkets and tailoring that has our fires burning this month



Portal Underground Poster Kit

£14.99 at ThinkGeek.com

Thanks to the success of *Portal 2*, the wider world of *Portal* and Aperture Science is wonderfully coming to life in a way that the first game didn't really allow. These posters taken from the lower levels of *Portal 2* are exactly the kind of thing any budding test subject should be getting their hands on.



Blue Denim Sackboy

\$32.99 at BigBadToyStore.com

Comic-Con this year, much like all other years, was full of exclusive, one-off pieces of memorabilia, but this year games were heavily supported, too. This Sackboy figure, for instance, wearing a Comic-Con shirt is pretty special. How Big Bad Toy Store got its hands on them we don't know.



Creepy Cuddlers

£12.99 each at ForbiddenPlanet.co.uk

Facing your fears is a big part of growing as a human being. That's what our therapist tells us anyway. As such we've taken to going to sleep with one of these creatures in our arms in the hope that we can rid ourselves of the crippling fear of a zombie apocalypse. So far, it's not working.

Team Sonic Shirt

£25 at InsertCoinClothing.com

If you consider yourself a true Sonic fan you will probably want to make it clear to all those around you that there's no doubt in your mind of who you support in the Sonic versus Eggman wars. Perhaps a good shirt to adopt for your local sports team? It would intimidate the opposition.



Eggman Industries Shirt

£25 at InsertCoinClothing.com

As part of celebrations for *Sonic The Hedgehog's* 20th anniversary we've seen plenty of commemorative items around. Insert Coin has brought its own brand of understated cool to the blue speedster's birthday with a couple of cool shirts. With this one you can pledge your allegiance to his nemesis Dr Eggman.

Hori HD LCD Monitor

£199.99 RRP

With a 720p display that can simulate 1080i and 1080p, this monitor makes your PS3 as portable as you could possibly hope for. Going on holiday or just paying some relatives a visit, this monitor will give you access to your HD gaming without you needing to hog someone else's TV.



God Of War Action Figures

£14.99 each at Play.com

There have been a few different Kratos action figures over the years, but we're pretty sure this is the first time some of the *God Of War* supporting cast has been moulded into plastic.

They've gone for some of the best characters of *God Of War III*, too, which only makes us want them more.

Final Fantasy XIII Trading Arts

£7.38 each at Play-Asia.com

These blind-boxed trading figures are a tricky business. You sort of have to be a true fan to commit to them, but then if you're a *Final Fantasy* player you are by definition a bit of a hardcore fan. And this collection is pretty good, too, so we imagine this will be high on your most wanted list (somewhere after *FFXIII-2*).



CONDITIONS: Enter discount code when placing order. MySoti.com discount code only valid on featured items between 4 August and 31 August. Visit MySoti.com for even more great T-Shirts.



Dwarf Shirt

£20.71 at MySoti.com

The classic dwarves of fantasy are probably the closest thing to role models that we on the *Play* team have. Their commitment to drinking, fighting and mining are very close to our own. Well, perhaps not the mining and fighting bit.



Octopong

£18.99 at MySoti.com

Multitasking is another attribute we have a great deal of respect for on *Play*, mainly because we're useless at it. We have trouble walking and talking. You definitely don't want to sit with us as we eat watching TV either. It gets messy.

Attack Kittens Shirt

£14.99 at GenkiGear.co.uk

Can we get a game where we release Attack Kittens? Someone can make that right? Maybe we should just make it ourselves on *LittleBigPlanet* or something. This idea needs to be playable as well as wearable thanks to Genki Gear. Let's make it so.



Zombie Zen Shirt

£14.99 at GenkiGear.co.uk

Resisting panic in a zombie apocalypse scenario is important. Being at peace with yourself and with the world around you, even when people's brains are being eaten, is important. Zen therefore is the perfect philosophy for aspiring zombie survivors.



Comic-Con Marvel Vs Capcom Minimates

\$19.99 at BigBadToyStore.com

We've featured the Minimates interpretations of the *Marvel Vs Capcom 3* roster before, but this limited-edition set features some of them in their alternate costumes. That's a pretty cool idea. Let's have more action figures with alternate costume versions we say.



Hori Real Arcade Pro V3 SA

£129.99 RRP

We've talked about the quality of Hori sticks before and this is their top-of-the-range model. With its solid, sturdy base and comfortable feel it's right up there with the top stick around for PS3. It's a little more expensive than some of the competition, but you get what you pay for as they say.

HIGH FIVE

Creatures that should be cuddly toys



Majin

Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom

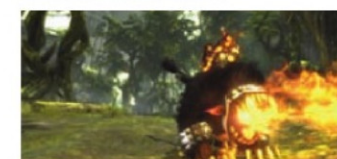
The game didn't blow us away, but we still really loved the design of Game Republic's magical beast, the Majin. He's just so goofy looking. Wouldn't he make an amazing cuddly toy? We think so.



Trico

The Last Guardian

Feathers don't really make for the best cuddly things, which is weird since some people fill pillows with them and they can be quite prickly. Anyway, we say make the feathers out of cloth and then Trico will be perfect.



Metal Beasts

Brutal Legend

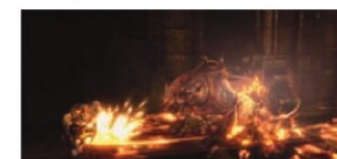
These guys are the very embodiment of heavy metal, but metal doesn't have to be hard and sharp. There's a lot of cuddliness to be found in the dank mosh pits. Metal heads are softies at heart is what we're saying.



Darkling

The Darkness II

This is the new Darkling from *The Darkness II*. He's a little bit more special than the old gang, first because he's the only one and second because he has a dead cat on his head. Dead cat = special. This is fact.



Cerberus

God Of War III

If a dog is man's best friend then a three-headed dog must be at least twice as good a best friend and if you make that three-headed dog into a cuddly toy... Well, we don't even know what you've got then. Something awesome probably.

INSTALL

PLAY

NOW Gamer NETWORK

Keep connected to Play

All the ways you can keep up to date with the Play team

imagineshop.co.uk

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Keep in touch with the team, too
@PlayMagRyan
@PlayMagChris
@PlayMagJon
@PlayMagJan



Facebook

Like us at www.facebook.com/PlayMagazineUK where you can ask questions, keep up to date with the team and laugh at pics of the team



YouTube

Subscribe to our channel at www.youtube.com/PlayMagUK which has the latest trailers and funny(ish) videos we made ourselves



Play-Mag.co.uk

Opinion, analysis and hilarity can be found on our website www.play-mag.co.uk so join the debate, tell us why we're wrong and make us cry a bit



Forum

Got something to talk about? Tell us on our forum: www.play-mag.co.uk/forum



Podcast

The Play team talks games every month
www.play-mag.co.uk/category/podcasts

Go to www.Play-Mag.co.uk for daily updates and features

inFamous 2's videogame/porn puns

A lot has changed for Cole MacGrath since his time in Empire City, not least finding a new home in the New Orleans-inspired town of New Marais. But this is a party town, full of booze, brawls and boobs. As such Sucker Punch has rather cheekily used videogames as inspiration for some of the X-rated movie titles shown in

the theatres around New Marais. These include such classics as 'Assassin's Need (Love Too)' and 'Little Big Unit'. Check out the images below for some more.

Oh, and check out the Sly 4 tease, which could well be related to the announcement of Sly Cooper: Thieves In Time.



Self-indulgent SFIII: 3rd Strike Online post

It's nearly out soon! Capcom promised to bring *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike* to PSN ages ago but it was only as recently as E3 that it showed up in playable form for the first time.

If I had to make a list of my top three games of all time, it would go *Shenmue II*, *Final Fantasy VIII* and *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike*.

I played over 10,000 (!) matches of *3rd Strike* on Xbox, PS2 and the arcades. In fact, I have spent more time and money on *3rd Strike* than I have any other game ever released ever in the world ever. Ever. EVER.

Why is it so good? The parry system. Instead of blocking and taking chip damage, you can tap towards (or down for low attacks) when you're about to get hit to parry the opponent. This freezes them for a split-second and allows you to counterattack. The downside is that it requires perfect timing and balls of steel. If you get the timing wrong you leave yourself wide open.

It's the kind of game mechanic where journalists bust out the 'risk/reward' cliché and hope that covers the appeal. But it's more than that. It's almost a showboating tactic. Parrying shows how deep your knowledge of the game is. Parrying makes *3rd Strike* fun to play. It lets you grab the momentum with a correct guess and keeps the pace of matches high.

Then there are the characters. *3rd Strike* isn't even remotely balanced with Yun, Chun-Li and Ken dominating high levels of play but the cast are fresh, different, unique and interesting.

When *SFIII: 3rd Strike Online* finally hits PSN the least you can do is give the demo a try.

Everyone needs to try it. In any case, I've got another 10,000 matches to rack up online...

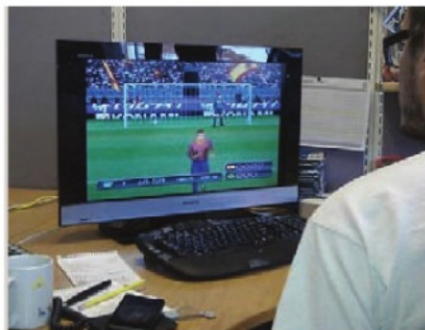


<http://t.co/UB072T>

facebook

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Things you may have missed on our Facebook page



WINNING ELEVEN 2002

A recent office move put us by the kitchen so now all we hear are the photography mag designers talk about their boyfriends but look what we found! "Shootooooo!"



IT MUST BE LOVE

Chris McMahon left Play to join X360, breaking up the greatest bromance of all time. Ian knows now why people cry although it is something he can never do.

PLAY DISCUSSION:

Play: Loose lips today are talking of *Uncharted*, *Ratchet & Clank* and *Resistance* getting bundle releases (as we've seen with *Sly Cooper*). If all three were confirmed, which one would you get?

Conor Garratt: None. I have *Uncharted 1 & 2* and *Resistance 1 & 2*, and to be completely honest I'm not too bothered about *Ratchet & Clank*. I see the point with PS2 games but not PS3 games being re-released :P

Josh Cutts: I would get *Uncharted* because I've never played them and it would be easier for me to get them in a bundle instead of separately

Nathan Jones: *Uncharted*!

Jack Zissley Zissell: Has *Twisted Metal* got a release date yet or is it still on the going back a month each month thing. The first release date was November last year...

Play: It's down for October. Looks set to hit that release date too, given it was playable at E3.

Jack Zissley Zissell: Was it good, did you play at E3, that and *Uncharted 3* are probably gonna be my games of the year

Play: Yeah. It wasn't... hmmm. It won't be game of the year, let's put it that way :(

Jack Zissley Zissell: Ah, I was really looking forward to it, it looked really cool, would you

say *Arkham Asylum* was a better buy?

Play: Definitely. Get that now.

Jack Zissley Zissell: IS IT OUT!!!! I was sure it was an October release!!! (facepalm, realised I said *Asylum* instead of *City*...)

Play: Separated at birth... Cole MacGrath and Robin from *Batman: Arkham City*

James Ward: I would have sex with both of them if that's what you're asking.

Play: It wasn't what we were asking, but thanks for sharing

Ruairi Kennedy: Why, Tim Drake, why?!

Jack Zissley Zissell: They look like Rooney before the hair transplant

Chris Robb: Is there going to be a *Metal Gear Solid* collectors edition?

Sandy Waller: Probably not. But there is always a chance.

Play: If you mean an HD collection there's going to be one released this November featuring *MGS 2*, *MGS 3* and *MGS: Peace Walker*. There's also been talk of an *MGS 1* remake, but that's not official yet.

Sandy Waller: Damn my ignorance.

Play: No bless it because it means we can actually tell you about something... it makes us feel educational and stuff.

Chris Robb: Is the collection on PS3 or PSP?

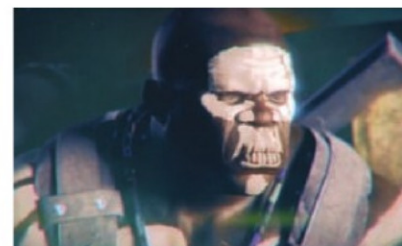
Play: PS3 in full HD beauty

Chris Robb: even *Peace Walker*. hell yeah!!!

You Tube

www.youtube.com/PlayMagUK

Things you may have missed on our YouTube page



BODYCOUNT - TARGET TROOP REVEAL



SAINTS ROW: THE THIRD - WALKTHROUGH



FAR CRY 3 - WALKTHROUGH



BINARY DOMAIN - STORY TRAILER



NEED FOR SPEED: THE RUN - TRAILER



DMC: DEVIL MAY CRY - TRAILER

twitter

www.twitter.com/PlayMag_UK

What have you been saying to us on Twitter?

@SACKOFDUTY

I would love it if @PLAYMAG_UK put this conversation in their next issue :D

@THETRIBE BRAND

Lol that would b AWESOME!!!! Quick keep adding @PLAYMAG_UK in the convo!! :-)

@SACKOFDUTY

YEAH @PLAYMAG_UK are Awesome right and if they put this in the mag we would be "eternally grateful" see *Toy Story* reference

@SACKOFDUTY

Well if @PLAYMAG_UK don't put this in the mag then Nathan Drake will Kill Defenseless sackboys :O

@THETRIBE BRAND

@PLAYMAG_UK r like a fine wine, only gets better with age

@PLAYMAG_UK

Right, this weekend, come hell or high water, I am playing *Beyond Good & Evil* again. But what about you? What will you be playing?

@VAMPRICAL

wow talk about old-school. I would be playing *Legend Of Legaia* again.

@Z_O_M_B_I_E_1

Going for the Trophies in *Call Of The Dead*. Watch out zombies.

@CRAYZEEBIKER636

playing *Sniper* and loving it esp slo-mo headshots. Really wish it was Oct tho so I could get *Batman* started

@SCAR_HEADFACED

I'll be playing *Battlefield 1943*, can't get enough of it. The level playing field due to no perks, makes it so much fun.

@PLAYMAG_UK

Next couple of tweets sent to us will feature in the mag. Not even lying. GO!

@WILLETH

BREASTS.

@ADAMGUEST1985

You won't print this.

@DIGITALTWISTED

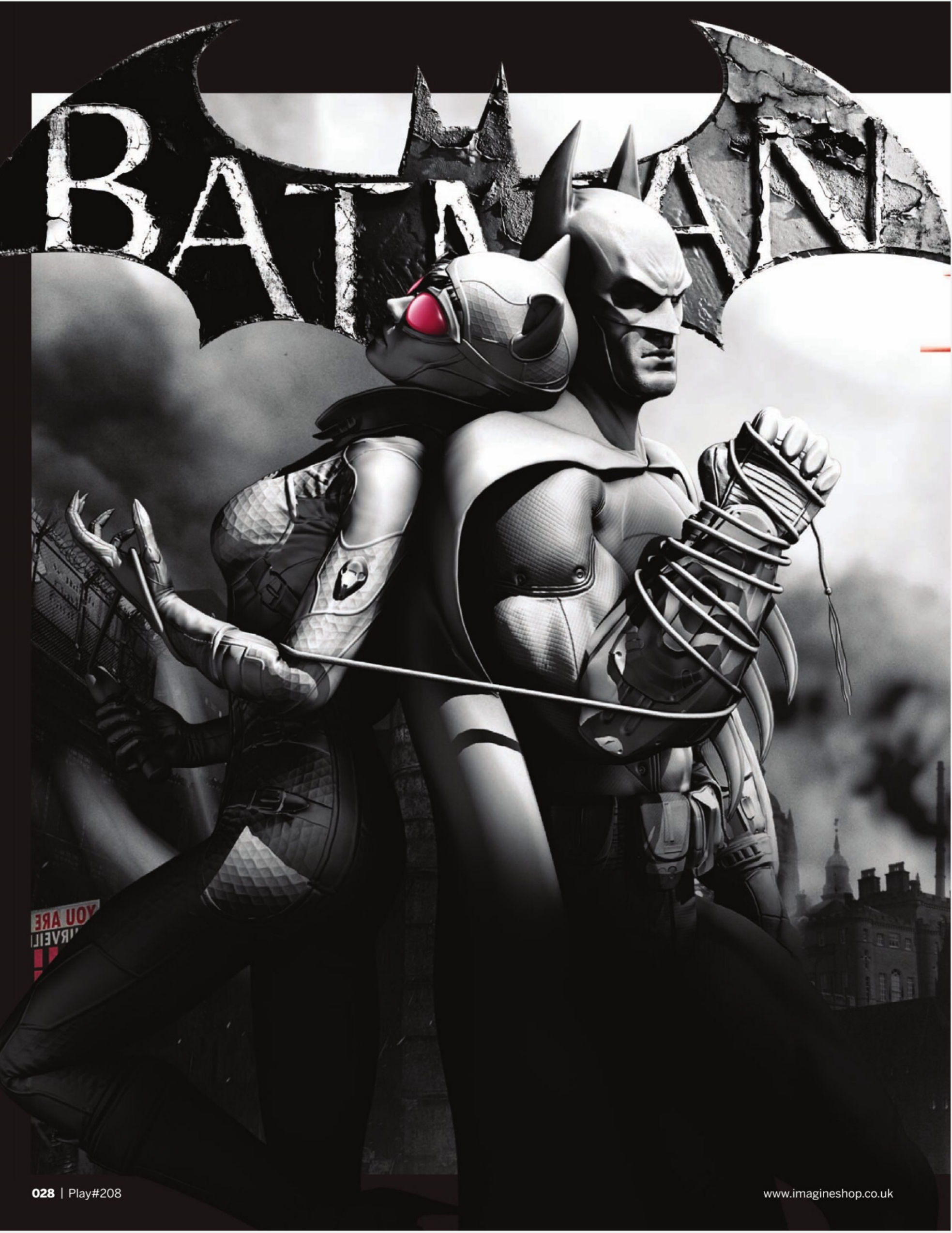
So it's rapier wit you are looking for, for the mag, well then you have come to the right place for I... I... I got nothing

@PLAYMAG_UK

New designer Andy: "I've not been back up North since I moved down here!" Dan: "Where are you from?" Andy: "...Essex"

@DAWGTAIAN

Andy = new Chris?



YOU ARE
IRVING



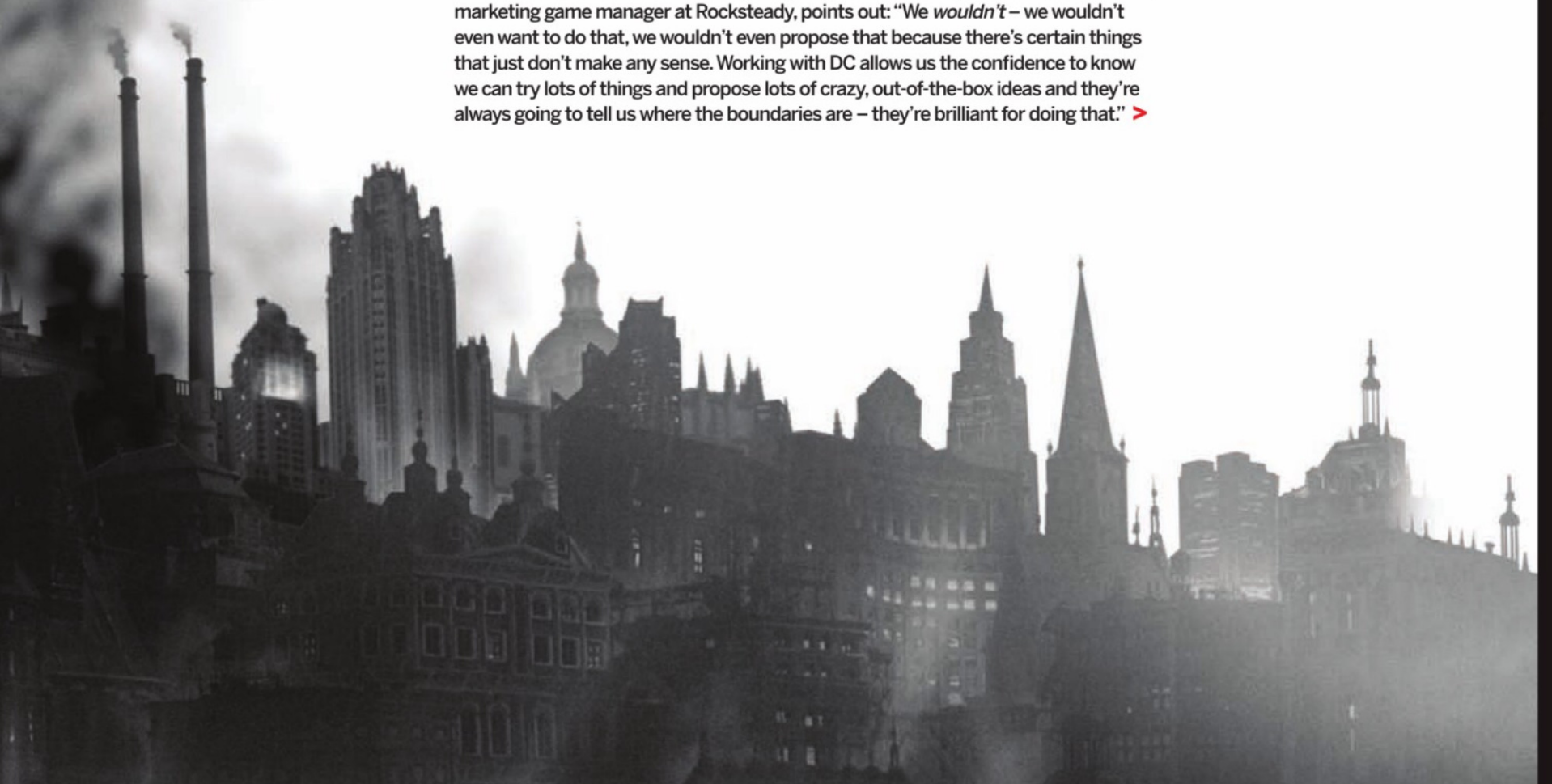
EXCLUSIVE HANDS-ON AND INTERVIEW

ARKHAM CITY

“THE BAT’S BACK: BIGGER, BOLDER, DARKER AND UNDER MORE THREAT THAN EVER – BUT THIS TIME HE’S GOT A CAT ON HIS SIDE. WE PUT OUR FINEST MILLIONAIRE PLAYBOY ON THE CASE TO FIND OUT JUST WHAT BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY DOES TO TAKE ROCKSTEADY’S SERIES TO THE NEXT LEVEL”

“There’s certain things that none of us would do – like if we said, ‘right, let’s give Batman a rocket launcher’, immediately that’s never going to fly.” It turns out Rocksteady knows what it’s doing when it comes to *Batman* – which is fortunate, what with the studio returning with the sequel to 2009’s breakout hit *Arkham Asylum*, this one cunningly entitled *Arkham City*.

But it’s not as frivolous as merely *not* giving Batman a weapon of war, as Dax Ginn, marketing game manager at Rocksteady, points out: “We *wouldn’t* – we wouldn’t even want to do that, we wouldn’t even propose that because there’s certain things that just don’t make any sense. Working with DC allows us the confidence to know we can try lots of things and propose lots of crazy, out-of-the-box ideas and they’re always going to tell us where the boundaries are – they’re brilliant for doing that.” >



STALKING IT'S NOT AN ACTIVITY WE OFTEN GET INVOLVED IN - UNLESS IT'S A BAT-GAME. IT'S GOOD TO KNOW CATWOMAN CAN GET IN ON THE ACTION, TOO.



SUPPORTING BAT-CAST

IT'S NOT JUST BATS AND SOME BIG-NAME ENEMIES, OH NO...

Somehow they managed to keep it under wraps, but Catwoman is playable in the single-player campaign of *Arkham City*. It doesn't end with the feline bandit, though, and a number of other characters make themselves known in many ways. Bane, for example, last seen being not-quite-dead in *Arkham Asylum* can now be teamed up with in order to rid the city of the Titan that Penguin is trying to hoard. Then of course there's Robin, with the Tim Drake incarnation of the Boy Wonder playable in challenge mode. Joker, Harley Quinn, The Riddler, Calendar Man, Hugo Strange – and there's plenty more to come, at least according to Rocksteady. It's enough to get lost in, that much we know, and is testament to the sheer number of DC characters abound.



THE PENGUIN KEENEST OF COLLECTORS AND SUAVEST OF THE BROKEN BOTTLE-WEARERS, POSES ONE OF THE NEW THREATS TO BATMAN IN *ARKHAM CITY*.



GLIDING IT SHOULD BE ONE OF THE MAIN JOYS IN ANY VIDEOGAME. AND IN *ARKHAM CITY* IT ABSOLUTELY IS, WITH THE WORLD PERFECT TO EXPLORE IN THE AIR.



> What exactly that entails we'll have to wait until October to find out, but generally speaking we've got a good idea. *Arkham City* thinks outside the box, outside the madhouse and just generally *outside*. The Dark Knight becomes embroiled in a city of crime closed off from Gotham proper – a world where the absolute worst of the worst meet, work together, clash and generally make nuisances of themselves in the way you would expect The Riddler, Penguin, Bane, Two-Face and the returning (slightly worse-for-wear) Joker, too. If it sounds like a lot of villainy to take on board, we're not even done yet – there's Calendar Man, Catwoman, Hugo Strange and many more, as Ginn says: "We're pretty strict at Rocksteady in terms of what assets we allow out of the studio, and everyone knows how important it is to make those reveals have as much impact as possible... we've still got some more reveals to come." Batgirl? Mr Freeze? King Tut?



IT'S EASY TO LOOK COOL WHAT WITH YOU BEING BATMAN AND ALL. BUT IT HELPS THAT THE GAME GOES OUT OF ITS WAY TO MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE A TOTAL BADASS.

OUR WANDERING AROUND THE DECREPIT, YET BEAUTIFUL, CORDONED-OFF REGION OF ARKHAM CITY HIGHLIGHTED MANY LITTLE NERD-PLEASING TOUCHES

It could conceivably be anyone in the *Batman* universe, such is Rocksteady's penchant for bringing in the marquee names along with the niche characters, purely to give the true fanboys a bit of a tingle. As Ginn says: "We reinterpret those characters – you can see our reinterpretation of The Riddler is pretty dark, our interpretation of Penguin is *really* dark – so they give us a lot of creative freedom to push those characters in really interesting directions." He goes on: "But, much like *Arkham Asylum*, we really want to make sure there's a load of obscure nods to other aspects of *Batman's* history as well, because *Batman* fans really dig that stuff."

Our wandering around the decrepit, yet beautiful, cordoned-off region

of *Arkham City* highlighted many of these little nerd-pleasing touches. Conversations with Calendar Man change depending on the actual, real-world date, to cover crimes he committed on major holidays around then – Christmas, Easter and the like. A trip down Crime Alley allowed Batman to pay respects to his murdered parents – the catalyst to him becoming the superhero he is. None of it feels forced, and all of it is a small joy to discover – if Rocksteady can keep the hits coming throughout the game it's going to be a fanboy's delight. Especially with how much you feel like a complete badass playing as Batman. Which, naturally, was intentional, as Ginn says: "Surrounded by 15 guys it's possible to cane through

them if you get your combos going and if you get into the flow of it... But give one of those guys a machine gun and it changes everything. I think that's something that gamers are going to find as they get deeper into the game... rather than just steaming straight into a fight, it probably makes more sense to take a step back, duck into Detective mode, see what weapons they've got, come out and then play on your strategy a bit more." New combo options and reversals – including double reversals, natch – make the flowing, balletic combat even more satisfying than before while maintaining the easy to pick up nature of the original. Instant gratification mixed with a subtle depth – it's what we wanted and it's what we're getting. >

DETECTING DETECTIVE MODE

A BIT MORE ON WHAT'S BEEN CHANGED

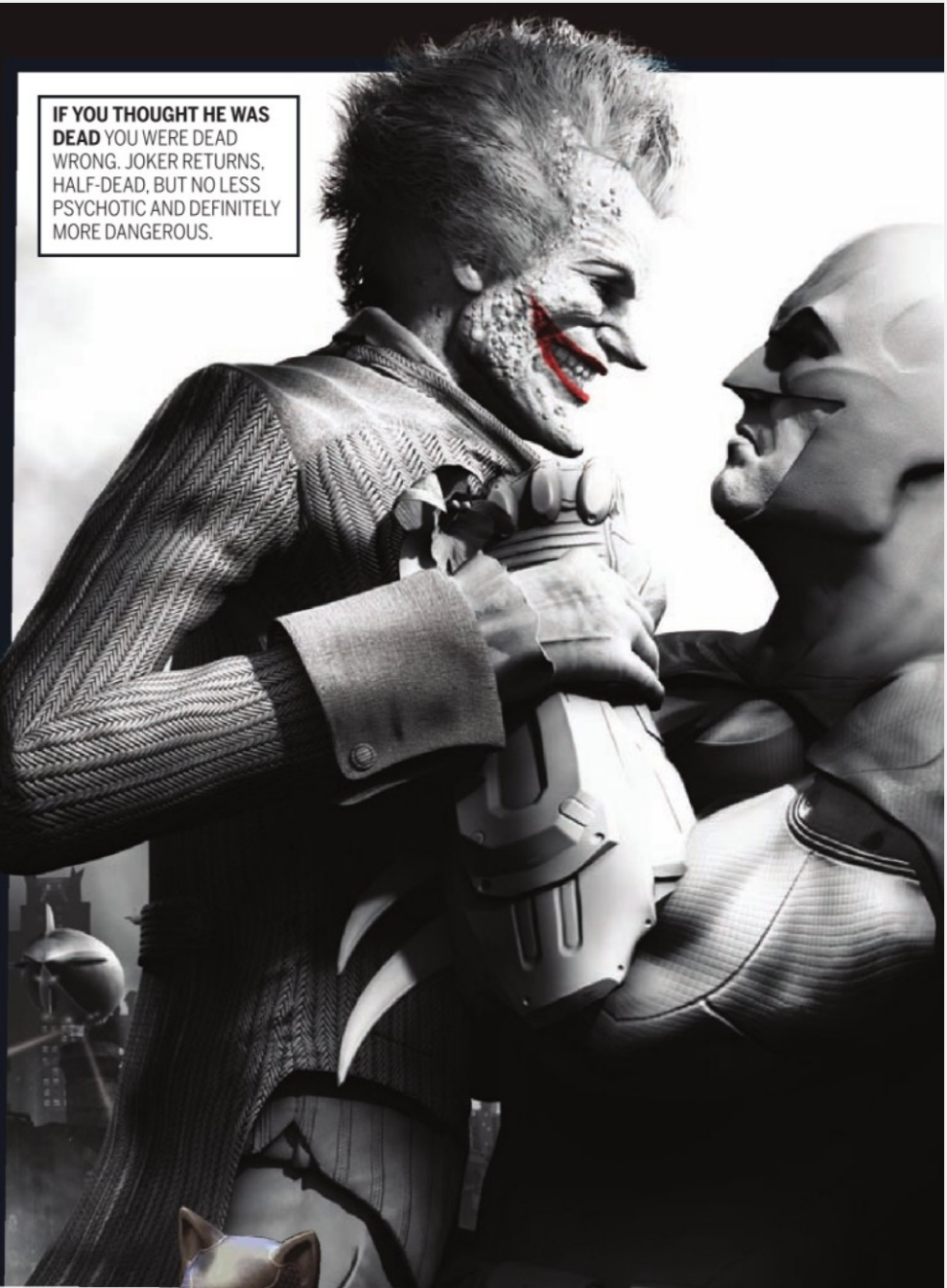
A bit more on Detective mode? Why not: "Say you get punched in a fight while you're in Detective mode for whatever reason, it'll kick you out of it, because that makes sense – your gadgets would get fried a little. There's also new abilities on the part of some of the new, highly trained, better-equipped enemies – like Penguin's thugs or the Tiger guards and Strange's gang – where they'll jam your tech, so Detective mode will go offline or become corrupted. You've then got to identify where the jammer is, identify them and take them out to allow you to use it again and carry on." Seems Ginn really knows how to allay any fears we might have.

“OUR TIME WITH ARKHAM CITY SHOWED US THE SHEER JOY OF GRAPPLING AND GLIDING AROUND THE WORLD, THROUGH THE ULTRA-SATISFYING BAT-COMBAT”

> Our time with *Arkham City* showed us many things, from the sheer joy of grappling and gliding around the world, through the slightly revamped (but generally the same) ultra-satisfying Bat-combat. But there was one thing that we forgot about – one thing we relied on no end first time around – Detective mode. It's still there and we did have to use it to trace the path of a sniper's bullet back to the shooter, but we didn't simply *live* in Detective mode like we – and many others – seemed to do in *Arkham Asylum*. And there's a very good reason for that, as Ginn points out: “We've definitely given a lot of consideration to how people felt like [Detective mode] was open to exploitation in *Arkham Asylum* and rebalanced that, rather than just saying, ‘okay we'll get rid of it’ because we wanted to keep it. It's a big part of who Batman is, being a detective, engaging in forensics is a big part of him – so to kill it altogether just

because it was unbalanced? We never even considered that. The focus was just on getting this to work.” So how did they get it to work? Simple: “Here's an example: at the top of the screen you have a radar – when you have objectives to achieve, when you lay down the Bat Signal they all appear on that compass. When you're in Detective mode it disappears – you don't have that. If you want to investigate a crime scene or there was some aspect of Detective mode you needed it for you would turn it on, but then when you wanted to head to another part of the game world you've lost all of your navigational aids if you want to stay in Detective mode. The player is incentivised to come out of it rather than being penalised – we could have put a 30-second timer on Detective mode that runs out and kicks you out, but there's no way Batman would design a gadget with an artificial 30-second timer on it.” >

IF YOU THOUGHT HE WAS DEAD YOU WERE DEAD WRONG. JOKER RETURNS, HALF-DEAD, BUT NO LESS PSYCHOTIC AND DEFINITELY MORE DANGEROUS.



SIMPLICITY WITH DEPTH COMBAT WILL BE FAMILIAR TO ARKHAM ASYLUM VETERANS, AND IT'S JUST AS SATISFYING.



FAR BE IT FROM US TO PASS JUDGEMENT BUT DOES THIS KIND OF TIGHT LEATHER OUTFIT REALLY LEND ITSELF TO SLINKING AND STRETCHING? MAYBE...

GET TO GRIPS WITH THE GRAPPLING HOOK

WHERE DOES HE GET ALL THOSE WONDERFUL TOYS?

You don't get the Batmobile in *Arkham City* as far as we know, but that doesn't make it difficult, slow or any less enjoyable to navigate the region. Far from it – aim at a rooftop and tap and you'll be flying up towards the ledge via the good old grappling hook. It reminded us of the original *Tenchu* – and that's not a bad thing. But a double tap (and hold) of before arriving at the rooftop makes Batman kick off at the summit and unleash his wings. Yes, it's very easy to just fly around *Arkham City*, and the developer promises that you will be able to navigate the whole area without touching the ground seem to be on the money. Lovely stuff.



SHE ISN'T PURRFECT BUT CATWOMAN IS WILLING TO WORK WITH BATMAN IN CERTAIN SITUATIONS. CAN SHE BE TRUSTED? PROBABLY NOT - SHE IS A VILLAIN, AFTER ALL.



PROWLING THE SKIES
THE DARK KNIGHT SPOTS HIS TARGETS FROM ABOVE. HE ATTACKS BEFORE THEY CAN REACT, USING CONFUSION, FEAR AND MASSIVE BICEPS TO EMERGE VICTORIOUS.



COMBAT IS A BIG PART OF THE GAME AND IS JUST AS SATISFYING AS BEFORE. IT'S ALSO APPROXIMATELY 35 PER CENT SEXIER, ACCORDING TO THIS SCREEN.

BATBUSTER BLOCKMAN

2011 IS A BUSY YEAR, BUT WILL ARKHAM CITY BE IN DIRECT COMPETITION WITH THE HEAVY HITTERS?

Is *Arkham City* aiming to take on the blockbusters? Does it draw influence from them? Ginn says no: "When I look at *Uncharted 3* I'm really excited by that... I think similar sorts of people will want to play that game. Add *Skyrim* into that, the new *BioShock* next year, *Assassin's Creed* – the next six months are going to be awesome. But I don't feel like there's imitation happening in any of these titles – they're all incredible blockbusters, they all do their own things and they all do them really well, but I don't feel like we're going to get the same experience from these games even though they sit in the same genre. I think they're all going to stand on their own."

“WE LEFT OUR HANDS-ON WITH ARKHAM CITY WANTING ONE THING AND ONE THING ONLY: TO PLAY MORE OF IT”

> *Arkham Asylum* wasn't a bad experience. In fact, it wouldn't be too much of a stretch to say it was really rather good, and certainly not a game that built up a backlog of post-release complaints like so many other titles do. All the same, did Rocksteady feel the need to make any big changes between the first game and *Arkham City*? Yes, but for different reasons than you might expect, at least according to Ginn: "The changes in design were more down to the fact we're in an open-world environment now. We had to really think how to tell story – you never really know where the player's going to be at any point in time, whereas in *Arkham Asylum* you had a pretty good idea – you're going to start here, the next corridor leads you to this point, it was a very intense, very focused experience. So it was a lot easier to tell a story

that made sense." He adds: "Now you can go anywhere you want – there's a surveillance system that Batman has as part of Detective mode that allows you to listen in on conversations. You'll hear thugs talking in the street about what's going on, so everywhere you go there's sort of *Batman* DNA just built into the game. Irrespective of where you might be you're getting fed story by overhearing conversations about rumours that are going on – it's really nice when you've just done something and people on the streets start talking about it, maybe they get some of the details wrong and there's some Chinese whispers thing going on, there's different theories different thugs have. So the surveillance system is a huge new addition, but it wasn't added because of a shortcoming with *Arkham Asylum*, it was necessary because of the

design decision we made in the move out into an open-world structure."

And what an open-world structure it is. We left our hands-on with *Arkham City* wanting one thing and one thing only: to play more of it. We were worried for a time that this sequel would simply be more of the same and lack any real ambition to improve. We're open to admitting we're wrong, sometimes, and this time we were wrong. This is a game that oozes ambition, style and an attention to detail that can't help but get us excited. The mechanics of the original game are already solid, so all Rocksteady has had to do is tighten a few bits up, improve on existing features and open things up to a huge, freely explorable world. And it has. And far be it from us to pass judgement on a game pre-release, but *Batman: Arkham City* is really, really good.



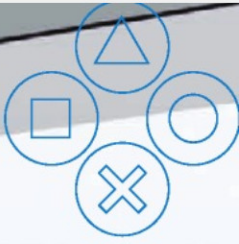
- PS3 (160GB Slim) **£199.99**
- Samsung SyncMaster B2230H 21.5-inch widescreen LCD monitor **£129**
- Any HDMI lead **£24.99**
- Xenta 5.1 Surround Sound Speaker System **£24.99**
- Some internet **£19.10**
- A second controller **£6.95**
- Gioteck Real Triggers **£3.45**
- Bluetooth headset **£5.95**
- Pad charging station **£4**
- Pimped-out stand **£10**
- Hard drive (500GB) **£44.55**
- Totally necessary Move accessories **£10**
- A TV stand **£8.99**
- A chair **£0**
- A hat fan **£4.30**
- Snacks **£2.19**
- Drinks **£0.92**
- Mood lighting **£2.99**
- Upper body clothing **£4-£5**
- Lower body clothing **£7**

TOTAL COST

You can get all this for just shy of £500. Not bad at all for a fully kitted-out gaming crib. On a budget, of course.

All prices were correct at the time of going to print, but the buggers have probably changed them in the time it took us to get into the shops. Also, costs don't take into account delivery or any other additional charges. So ner.





THE ULTIMATE BUDGET HD SETUP

We all want the perfect gaming setup, but we don't all have the cash to get the best of the best. So let **Play** step in and fill this particular budget-conscious hole in your life – we've scoured THE ENTIRE INTERNET to find a useful, *cheap* way to arrange your gaming life. This isn't luxury or idealistic like you might see elsewhere – this is realistic and based on real people, like you, like us, who can't afford gold-plated TVs that cost more than the GDP of most African nations



Any HDMI lead

>£1.99

>eBay

If you ever buy into the notion that you need to buy an expensive HDMI lead then you've been taken for a mug, sunshine. The leads deal in digital signals: they either work or they don't. Signal degradation isn't an issue over short distances, so a two quid cable will sort you.

<http://bit.ly/1IYfBb>



Pimped-out stand

>Around £10

>DealExtreme

Have you ever wanted to add totally sweet badassness to your PS3? Of course you have. And with a totally sweet, badass addition like this to your console, you're certain to be the talk of the town. Plus your console will be able to stand on its side easier.

<http://bit.ly/k6SFyo>



Bluetooth headset

>£5.95

>Amazon/eBay

Obviously you'll need to be able to talk to the people who are beating you at *Gus Gun's Shootist Fury IV: This Time It's BANG!* online, so a Bluetooth headset is absolutely necessary. Fortunately, thanks to companies other than Sony existing, it's possible to get a headset that 'works' for a tiny price.

<http://amzn.to/kLzRYs>



PS3 (160GB Slim)

>£199.99

>Amazon/Play/eBay/etc

Self-explanatory, really. This is about the best deal you can get for a bog-standard slim PlayStation 3, but you can pick one up cheaper if you wait for one-off deals, or are willing to make your way through the murky waters of second-hand. This is the centrepiece of your entire setup, remember.

<http://bit.ly/kMmeLx>



Xenta 5.1 Surround Sound Speaker System

>£24.99

>ebuyer

Can't get surround sound for a super-cheap price? You've never been wronger, you price-idiot. For a penny less than 25 quid, you too can get confused the first few times you hear sounds coming from all around you. It'll be all like "whoosh!" and "vroom!" and "bang!" and you'll be all like "whaaaaaaat?"

<http://bit.ly/jDwKdx>



Samsung SyncMaster B2230H 21.5-inch widescreen LCD monitor

>£129

>Amazon

You need something to play your games on, and TVs tend to be quite expensive. So knock things down a notch and get yourself a monitor instead – capable of outputting at 1080p and with an HDMI connection, this is one of the best bang-for-your-buck monitors available to us budgeteers.

<http://amzn.to/m5gmXG>



Some internet

>£19.10 per month

>TalkTalk

Unfortunately, broadband packages tend to demand line rental, which pushes the price up to a less tempting number. Still, for not too much per month you can get yourself online and hurl abuse at people who are better than you at games. Definitely shop around on this point, though.

<http://bit.ly/lguJmh>

BUDGET CLOTHING



A hat fan

>Around £4.30

>DealExtreme

You need to keep cool while gaming – it can be a stressful endeavour, no more so than in the hot, clammy summer months. You need to keep cool, but a plug-in desk fan is a bit much. Step forward hat-fan, which is both solar powered and constantly pointing straight at your face. Brilliant.

<http://bit.ly/iHW1KK>



Upper body clothing

>Around £4-5

>eBay

Your room doesn't just need to look the part – you need to look the part, too. What item of clothing screams 'budget' more than any other? Why, the string vest of course, as favoured by such budget luminaries as Rab C Nesbitt and that bloke off *Keeping Up Appearances*. Ah, Nineties references.

<http://bit.ly/mq06Uj>



Lower body clothing

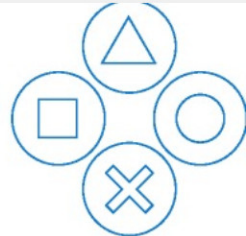
>Around £7

>eBay

While naturally you're fine to sit on your own in your underpants – or even naked – in your own crib, sometimes you are forced into wearing things on your legs. We've got you covered, in more ways than one, with these cheap, yet comfortable, jogging trousers. Parfait.

<http://bit.ly/iV5ZsO>

THE ULTIMATE BUDGET SETUP



Snacks

>£2.19

>Tesco

You need some snackable, munchable treats to keep energy levels high during a session in your fully kitted out gaming den (budget edition). What better way to keep yourself going than with 550 grams of Tesco's finest* jumbo peanuts? Well, a fair few things, but these will do and they're cheap. *Not finest. <http://bit.ly/mc4dtE>



Drinks

>92p

>Tesco

Why just drink something that's there merely to quench your thirst? That just sounds like pointless crap to us, which is why you should buy a litre of Emerge instead. "Fruit flavoured" energy drink may not be on a par with PowerThirst, but it does the job for a low, low price. <http://bit.ly/j24jDC>



Mood lighting

>£2.99

>Argos

Rather than simply getting a lamp or faffing about with something that has a dimmer switch, you should instead opt for a bag of 100 tealights. These tiny candles will add an air of classy atmosphere to your (cheap) den. Which is good, because it probably looks quite tacky. <http://bit.ly/kCAOtW>



Pad charging station

>Around £4

>DealExtreme

You can always just use the USB charging cable bundled with the PS3, but those wanting to live in the lap of budget luxury surely need one of these. Stylish and elegant it is not, but it'll probably work – for a bit – and it means you can have a little pad rack going on. <http://bit.ly/jalK01>



A chair

>£0

>Freecycle

Everybody needs a gaming chair, but who can be bothered going to Ikea for their affordable Swedish crap? Plus it's not in the true spirit of being truly budget-conscious, as we've decided to call 'being tight'. Freecycle comes into its own – people give away chairs in your local area all the time. Sorted. <http://bit.ly/w6Nz0>



ATV stand

>£8.99

>Argos

You can obviously just put your monitor on the floor for the ultimate in budget chic. But for a mere nine pounds you can elevate the screen somewhat, as well as giving your PS3 a little cubbyhole to live in – thus keeping it away from the evil vent-clogger known as 'resting it on the carpet'. <http://bit.ly/iYJD1Z>



Hard drive (500GB)

>£44.55

>ebuyer

Not just any hard drive, but the Samsung HM500JI 500GB. 160GB might be plenty of space for you, and that's fine. But if you want your PS3 to be a full-on media hub you're going to need more space. With 500 whole giggerlobytes to use you aren't going to run out of room anytime soon. <http://bit.ly/98Y8hr>

BUDGET CONTROLLERS



Gioteck Real Triggers

>£3.45

>Play

You obviously want the best playing experience in your perfect gaming setup, so for a few extra coins with the Queen's face on them you can get these near-essential badboys. Basically they make the DualShock 3's triggers work like real triggers should, and not like things designed by someone who doesn't know what buttons are. <http://bit.ly/zRi4q>



Totally necessary Move accessories

>Around £10

>DealExtreme

Imagination is overrated – why pretend what you're holding is a sword when you can get a cheap piece of crap to put on it and make it *look* like a sword? Obviously if you don't have Move, you have no need for this. Unless you want these fine pieces as ornaments for the mantelpiece. <http://bit.ly/jJBFsn>



A second controller

>£6.95

>Amazon/eBay

Technically – technically – this isn't what we would call an 'official Sony peripheral'. Mainly because it isn't. Which means it'll likely be the worst thing in the world. Still, you won't be using it because, as it's your crib, you'll always be player one and so on the Real Pad. <http://amzn.to/jgaP0y>



● The higher up in the city you are, the more futuristic architecture is on display.



ワイプアウト Wipeout 2048

PSVita is on the charge and Wipeout 2048 is leading the way. Ian Dransfield chronicles the return of a gaming legend...



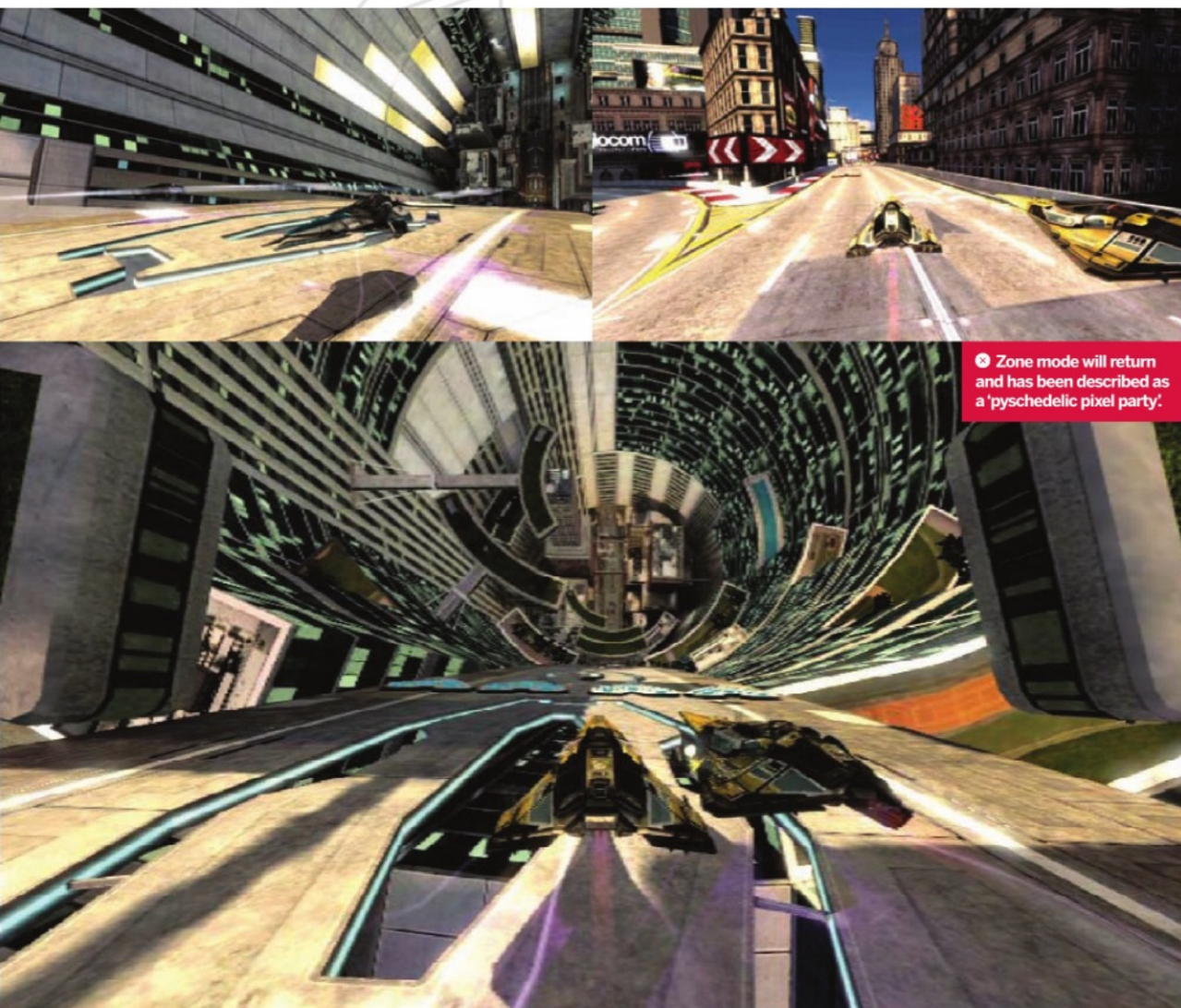
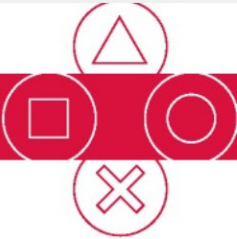
What is *Wipeout 2048* then? Let's ask Graeme Ankers, game director at Sony: "2048 is set in an East Coast US city 37 years from now. The environments look more realistic because they are based in a recognisable city. This gives us the chance to blend future, contemporary and retro architecture together, which produces a rich and dynamic environment for the player to race through." And now you know.

The *Wipeout* series was one born at the same time as the PlayStation itself, back in the heady days of 1995 – the Sony PlayStation was released with *Wipeout* among the launch titles. We are so closely linked to the series it's verging on bizarre, so the build up to the release of a new title in the series is always cause for celebration and vague, unfocused

nostalgia. But this new game is set before even the original game chronologically, as Ankers points out: "In essence we are setting this game at the dawn of the sport and this allows us to be creative with the cutting-edge architecture and technology in the world while bedding it in the reality of an existing city. With 2048 our vibe is to show everyone where it all began, just a few years after anti-gravity was invented and then used in the sport."

Wipeout 2048 aims to bring an established brand to a new audience, and as such it might well offend those of a more precious disposition. Wider tracks, a more forgiving difficulty curve and the ability to not have to be absolutely perfect at every element of the game in order to achieve some modicum of success are just three ways Studio Liverpool is going about its business. That's not to say it'll be diluted or in any real way less competitive than the *Wipeout* we know and love. If anything it'll be more so, with the team aiming to bring many new methods and mechanisms with which you can take on friends and enemies the world over. Obviously we live in the future, meaning we can now rely on invisible beams of pure energy to send our games to each other wirelessly and almost instantly – it's called 'the internet', or something, and it's a technology that's being made full use of for *Wipeout 2048*.

A persistent online presence is what Studio Liverpool is aiming for with Vita's new hover-racing game. Ankers again: "We wanted to offer something a little different with our online play in *Wipeout 2048*. Players are treated to a structured experience more like the single-player game in which they have set objectives. These objectives carry their own difficulty curve, allowing players to start achieving great things online from their first race."



Zone mode will return and has been described as a 'psychedelic pixel party'.



Studio Liverpool says the tracks won't be as confusing to follow this time round.

That's not to say it'll be *World Of Warcraft*, just with a 300mph hovering metal arrowhead as your avatar – more that your progress through the world of online racing will be constant, instead of a series of disjointed, disconnected races. And Studio Liverpool is aiming for an experience that can be enjoyed even by those that, frankly, are a bit bad at racing games. Rather than straightforward 'win at all costs' logic that can leave those lesser-skilled players behind, *Wipeout 2048* will operate on an individual challenge basis.

Basically, players will be given their own task for each race – starting out small, with things like 'don't finish last' or 'destroy one other player' and building up as experience and ranking increases. But even at the top level you won't be looking at simply 'finish first' every time – each player will have their own agenda in every single

race, and it's an approach that's very interesting indeed.

Plus, speaking of invisi-wire multiplayer, there's also cross-platform play – a far cry from any previous *Wipeouts*, which have remained resolutely single-platform when played together. Stupid technologically inferior past... Anyway, this does mean Vita users can play with and against PS3 users, though we're not sure about pricing structures or whether you'll have to buy two copies of the game or whatever just yet. It's a feature to keep your eyes on, though.

There's also the Vita-specific control features we've talked about before – *Wipeout* is a series that has progressed from digital, standard pad controls back in 1995, through the analogue series of controllers and is now entering the heady world of touch screens and tilting. As we've said before, it's surprisingly not that bad, and is something we're going to look at a great deal on *2048*'s release. In fact, Ankers has these words to throw into the mix: "You really feel connected to your ship

when you use tilt to lean into corners and it's a very different experience compared to using sticks. That being said, it all comes down to player preference, and many of our players even prefer to use the D-pad for steering. We've made sure that we accommodated all preferences in our control layouts."

It wouldn't be *Wipeout* without some hot club techno vault underground skiffle music pumping away in the background, and Ankers has news to please us on this point: "I've always been a massive Orbital fan. Their style is perfect for the excitement, drama

and design of *Wipeout* so they were our first choice artist to approach for *Wipeout 2048*. It's fortunate that they have featured in our previous games, and they were really excited about contributing to this game. They have done two tracks specifically mixed for the game. We are also working with other globally popular artists, some who have done tracks for previous *Wipeout* games, and some which are new to the franchise. It's shaping up to be a really exciting soundtrack."

But, well – it's old. *Wipeout* is old. Should we care? Ankers says you should, and we're inclined to agree: "You also have to be brave with *Wipeout* to keep it relevant in the minds of gamers after 16 years. *2048* has given Studio Liverpool the opportunity to expand the *Wipeout* universe, and even now it feels so fresh and like we are only just getting started. When someone wants to play a high-quality racing title, we're as relevant as they come."



THE WIP-OUT ORIGINALS



In creating the look of the original Wipeout games, The Designers Republic may have had the biggest contribution outside of development to shaping the future of PlayStation. Ryan King tracked them down to talk to TDR's Ian Anderson about how it went down...

How did your relationship with Sony and creating the original Wipeout look come about?

Psygnosis in Liverpool asked us to come over and get involved in the packaging design. Given the impending launch of the then-new PlayStation platform, they were aware that there needed to be a significant and high-profile change in the way their games were not only packaged but also perceived. They knew there needed to be something new, but were probably too close to see what that change needed to be for themselves.

We worked closely with them to identify where the changes could be most effective but I think I knew from the start what the change needed to be and it was more about changing the industry's perception of its market, and the market's expectations of the industry.

When we got involved there was a general disconnect between the techno literate otaku playing the games and the dead metal and air-brushed serpent wrapped amazons stalking the branding. Put simply, we applied the same attitude/approach/art to the branding and packaging as we did to music, clubs and events.



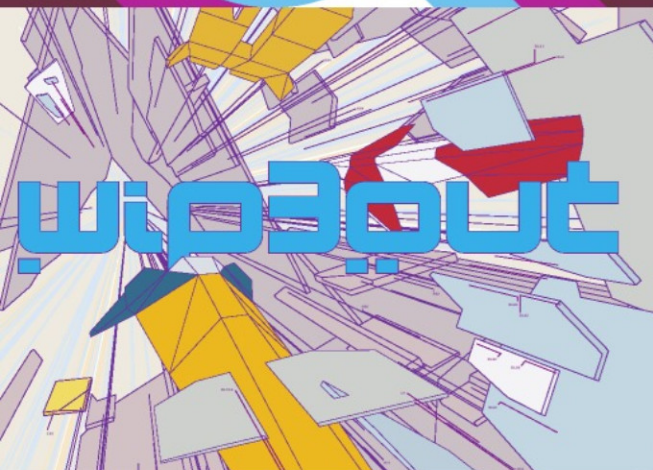
During this process we wanted to talk to the developers to get their feel for the game and the world it inhabited. There was clearly a synergy between their inspirations and motivations, and our own various modus operandi. They asked us initially to contribute artwork and iconography for use in-game which developed into a role of branding the teams and the environments they raced in.

The relationship, like any other, was initially purely a business deal – they'd identified a problem, called the A-team and we delivered a solution – from there it grew on creative and personal levels until it was no longer really a job at all – more a mission.

When Sony first approached you to create art for the game, what was their brief?

Change the way games packaging looks forever.





What was the process in creating the artwork?

Work with the people who understood what we were doing, avoid the people who didn't. Even going back to TDR's early designs for bands like Leeds' Age of Chance, and labels like Sheffield's FON Records, the way I naturally worked was to create a 'world of' for each project which would be populated throughout the creative gestation period with ideas, influences and information which was applicable and which excluded everything which therefore by default *wasn't*.

The reason the worlds of *Wipeout* are so cohesive and credible visually is because we took that approach and applied it literally – not only to the wider picture but to the specifics of every element down to the branding and corporate identities of the teams and the HUD screens. We developed identities with back stories and personalities for the teams rather than just cranking out a few ready-made future graphics reruns.

How much influence did you have over the artistic direction?

We were given carte blanche, the people at Psygnosis were smart enough to know that if they wanted us to deliver what they had commissioned us to do, then they were entering territory unfamiliar to them, meaning it would be senseless for them to direct us. What they did, that a lot of people in the industry could learn from now, was to stand back and encourage and guide our creativity in the direction they needed it to be, and to support us in whatever we needed to deliver whenever they needed.

It's fair to say that how *Wipeout* actually looked was almost exclusively down to TDR, why it looked that way was down to the original vision of the developers and the marketing department's passion to make it happen.



How much work did you create for *Wipeout* – did it extend as far as the tracks themselves, the team names and so on?

With the first *Wipeout* the vast majority of the narrative was in place, we really just made the concepts flesh. Increasingly, from the initial concepts for *Wipeout 2097* onward, the lines and roles became blurred and more and more we were trusted to develop and evolve the worlds and the racing teams, the corporations behind them and the pilots who flew their craft in parallel with the game development itself. We were fans of the game itself and so were more interested in bringing to life the developer's ideas and sketches, than in controlling the process ourselves.

What kind of look were you hoping to capture on the *Wipeout* series?

Exactly what you see. A believable, tangible 'now' in the near future. In the same way we worked with bands in terms of package and tour-related merchandise, we deliberately created imagery and icons which could be exploited or consumed on a fan level. We wanted the design to be good enough to nudge people into supporting one team over another and we provided visual assets flexible enough to be applied to merchandise and other rollout for those people to invest in to show their support. We wanted players to be partisan, to wear the colours, buy the merchandise and fly the flag.

How much do you feel The Designers Republic contributed to not just *Wipeout's* success, but also to the success of the PlayStation?

Our contribution to *Wipeout* grew and turned out to be immense, and by association, our work was a small but significant factor in establishing PlayStation as something not just technologically better, but a superior platform both by design and intent.

The impact of what we did has never been replicated because developers and distributors still try to replicate what *Wipeout* was rather than working with us on the 'why'. Also, in parallel with the music industry, it's unlikely that, in the complex world of scientific marketing and corporate tie-ins/ups that any of the major players will feel comfortable relinquishing the level of creative control necessary to develop anything as comprehensively conceived as *Wipeout*.

Would you welcome the opportunity to work on the *Wipeout* series again?

The answer would, of course, be so much more satisfying in the context of this piece if it were an unequivocal YES! But the truth is less cut and dried.

It would depend on who was involved, and whether I felt that we could work with them and whether I believed they could deliver something new that added to rather than detracted from the originals. It's also fair to say I would like to do something new, but on the same terms and in the same context applying the attitude/approach/art to a new set of criteria and source material.

Even *Wipeout 2048's* look is intrinsically linked to the original vision, and while I'd have loved to be involved, I have to ask what is it that I would be allowed to add to it now?

Thanks to Ian Anderson and The Designers Republic for their help with this feature.

All artwork © The Designers Republic™ / Ian Anderson



DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

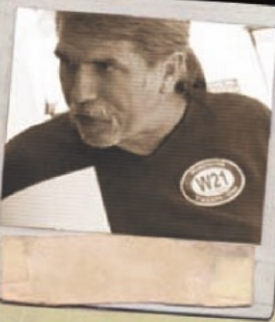


WHAT WENT WRONG

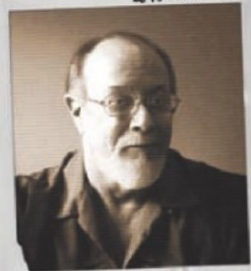
Male genitalia, giant alien dildos and where Gearbox screwed up – original Duke Nukem Forever creator 3D Realms tells us what really happened 15 years ago...



TOP SECRET



NAME: GREG MALONE
THEN: CREATIVE DIRECTOR, DUKE NUKEM 3D
NOW: DESIGN CONSULTANT, SANTA FE ARTS CENTRE
SAYS: "THEY RELIED TOO MUCH ON THE POTTY-MOUTH GIMMICK"



NAME: STEPHEN HORNBACK
THEN: ARTWORK, DUKE NUKEM 3D/DUKE NUKEM FOREVER
NOW: RELEASED DIN'S CURSE, SOLDAD ENTERTAINMENT
SAYS: "GEARBOX MIGHT WANT TO HIRE SOME TALENTED WRITERS"



NAME: KEN SILVERMAN
THEN: PROGRAMMER, DUKE NUKEM 3D
NOW: RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING
SAYS: "MY OBSESSION WAS NOT WHAT DUKE EATS FOR BREAKFAST ON LEVEL 17"



NAME: DAVID DEMARET
THEN: ARTWORK, DUKE NUKEM 3D
NOW: PAINTER
SAYS: "LOOK AT DANTE'S REBOOT, HE LOOKS STUPID AS HELL NOW"



Finally, it happened. It took 15 years, countless previews, broken promises and more 'the longest-running jokes in the games industry' references than anyone could keep track of, but, finally, it happened. *Duke Nukem Forever* was sitting on store shelves. Only one problem. It was **DIRE**.

"Not only is *Duke Nukem Forever* not worth the wait, it's not worth **ANY** wait. Ten years ago it would have been bad. 15 years ago it wouldn't have been worth playing. Today? It's a joke, and one that's just not funny," wrote Ian Dransfield in issue 206 of **Play**. He's not the only one who thinks so. "*Duke* is an 18-rated game made for 13 year olds, and yet it is the gameplay that is the biggest disappointment," says **X360** magazine, while **360** magazine says, "infrequent moments of potential are soiled by bottom-rung production values, sloppy execution and dated design."

So from the excellent *Duke Nukem 3D* to its awful sequel *Duke Nukem Forever*,

what actually went wrong? We tracked down the original *Duke Nukem 3D* team to get their thoughts and find out what they'd do differently, how far Gearbox strayed from the original and how male genitalia almost made it into the game...

MISOGYNY WENT TOO FAR

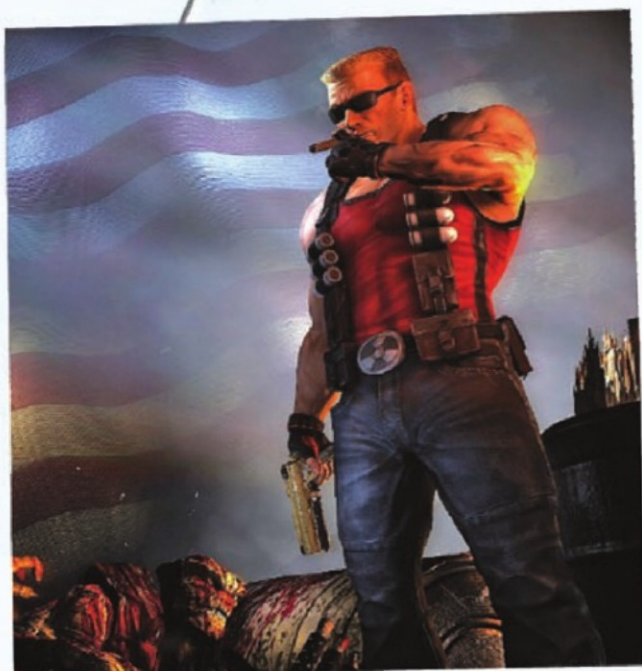
While most reviews read like a shopping list of problems, one of the main complaints levelled at *Duke Nukem Forever* is that the tone is completely off, taking the tongue-in-cheek overtones of *Duke Nukem 3D* and cranking it up to embarrassing levels. It was embarrassing for us and even more so for the original team, who agreed that new *Duke* had gone too far with pushing the crude aspect of the character.

"I was personally not entirely comfortable with that aspect of Duke's character," says *Duke Nukem 3D*'s creative director Greg Malone. "Though in perspective we purposefully kept it at a very low level in *Duke Nukem 3D*. Our use of Duke's street-persona

characteristics were used more like seasoning on a steak. Just enough, but not too much. I give *Duke Nukem 3D*'s executive producer George Broussard much credit for seeming to have a good sense of how to strike that balance. It seems, though, that the new *Duke* has gone over the top with most categories of male-lymbic brain language and themes, female exploitation, juvenile bathroom humour and so on. I am sure that the design team of the new *Duke Nukem* were a fine group of folks, but somewhere along the line they decided that ramping up *Duke*'s offensiveness would be an easy way to make the game more controversial and fun for those that get into that mentality. As history shows, though, if one relies too much on a simple formulaic gimmick too much, many see right through the manipulation and wind up with an opposite response than desired."

"I do remember a time when Greg Malone came into my office and asked me to create a 'gib' of male genitalia for the game," explains Stephen Hornback, in charge of the game's art. "For the few who don't know, gibbs are body parts that fly when you kill a character in the game. I complied. After work that day I went home to my wife who asked, 'So what did you do today?' My answer, 'Well, I... ummm... hmmm.' Somewhat to my relief, that never made it into the game." >

“With the infamous 15-year Duke Nukem Forever spectacle, the reviewers have been sharpening their knives in anticipation of finding fault”
GREG MALONE



THE 'GIANT ALIEN DILDO'

One scene that caused controversy in *Duke Nukem Forever* is the implied alien rape of the Holson twins, with the argument against it being that *Duke Nukem 3D* never went that far. Yet it nearly went much further – David Demaret, who provided additional artwork at 3D Realms, shows an unused screenshot of impaled girls in the alien base. “I remember Greg Malone asking me one day, ‘Dave, can you draw us a giant alien dildo?’ Do you think you can do that?” says Demaret. “And I said, ‘Of course, boss, I’m on it right now!’ That was the Duke spirit. It was removed by George Broussard at the last minute because he feared that the game would be censored in big supermarket chains, I was really sad because everyone loved that artwork.”

“It seems as though new Duke has gone over the top with female exploitation, juvenile bathroom humour and so on”
GREG MALONE

> 'LACKED DIRECTION'

Another game that was notorious for delays and development trouble was *Prey*, which was also being made at 3D Realms. Its engine was so far advanced at the time, it may have piled pressure on the *Duke Nukem Forever* team to come up with something even better and prompted the over-ambition that stalled the game for 15 years.

“I heard talk about *Duke Nukem Forever* at that time,” says David Demaret, who worked on Duke’s art. “There was a lot of talk and ideas at the time, *Quake* was just out, things were really hot at 3D Realms. They decided on the title ‘*Duke Forever*’ immediately and wanted to start work right away but the *Prey* engine that was being worked on back then... the *Prey* engine was way ahead of the competition with advanced lighting, destructible environments and portal technology. They started to work on *Duke Forever* on a modified Build engine (the one used for *Duke Nukem 3D*) with tons of cool and crazy ideas that couldn’t be possible with original *Duke*, like using 3D models and a ‘real’ 3D world for a start.”

Programmer Ken Silverman, who left the developer immediately after work on *Duke Nukem 3D* wrapped up, thought the problem was that the team didn’t really know what they were doing and didn’t have a plan. “After *Atomic* (*Duke Nukem 3D* expansion pack), the Duke team

messed a little bit with voxel sprites, but by that time Build was old, my future with 3D Realms was in question and they lacked any direction.” Ouch.

DUKE WAS OUT OF DATE

One of the other main grumbles is that *Duke Nukem Forever* contains an uncomfortable mix of its old design awkwardly meshed together with modern nods to gaming. Yet those who are blaming Gearbox for including those modern touches such as recharging health and the two-weapon limit might be aiming their ire in the wrong direction.

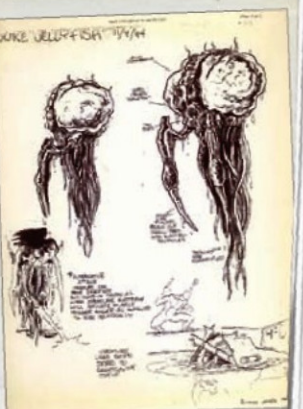
“Oh, the team certainly kicked around similar ideas,” says Malone when asked if they were original touches or Gearbox’s attempt to freshen things up. “These are not new concepts to gaming. For instance, I used Karma and other personality traits to represent energy and other capacities in my *Moebius* series of games a decade earlier. But I do remember well how we chose to keep functions as basic and easy to grasp as possible, preferring to put emphasis on gameplay balance.”

“Some of the initial ideas remained with the game, such as having Duke live in Las Vegas in his own casino,” adds Hornback, reasserting how much of the old vision lives on in the current game. “I remember doing a bunch of work on textures regarding the Hoover Dam. I think both of those locations are still in the final game.

There was also the plan to continue on with Duke’s high level of irreverence.”

So it seems that the *Duke Nukem Forever* we have now is in some ways the same *Duke Nukem Forever* that 3D Realms wanted, even if the humour missed the mark. So how do you update *Duke Nukem* and make it relevant in a world of *BioShocks* and *Battlefields*? “That’s a difficult question,” says Hornback. “Poking fun at himself was something that was appreciated in *Duke Nukem Forever* by some. Since many of the gamers of the world have become a bit more sophisticated, it might be a good idea to come up with humour that’s a bit more sophisticated. However, this is a razor’s edge. Too much sophistication would ruin Duke’s persona. Gearbox might want to hire some talented writers to come up with some clever lines for Duke if there’s a sequel.”

However, Demaret thinks the opposite and says that updating *Duke Nukem* would go against his character. “Well, he sure is outdated but it’s a trademark after all. Updating his look would feel ‘stupid’ like what they do in Hollywood with their so-called reboots. Duke is Duke and changing it too much would be a huge mistake. Just take a look at the new Dante, for example. For the sake of ‘coolness’ and ‘modernity’ he looks stupid as hell now. So no, except for a little tweak in the clothes, I would keep Duke that way. I think they did a good job with the final *Duke Nukem Forever* version.”



IDEAS THAT DIDN'T MAKE IT



DUKE NUKEM FOREVER - 1998

Using primitive 3D technology, the first iteration was full of ideas that never made it – a collapsing pier, a female Duke sidekick, mine-cart riding, alien NPCs, a boulder chase and invisible enemies are some of the few that gave way as development progressed.

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER - 2001

The storyline is different, as the president is kidnapped and the EDF doubt that you can save the world. This version was also brimming with fresh ideas including donkey riding, a riot shield of your own, a Terminator-style boss and a speedboat section.



DUKE NUKEM FOREVER - 2003

This is the first time 3D Realms decided to bring in the Ego mechanic, although it worked separately to the health. It's very dark and the tone is more that of a horror than the lightweight Duke Nukem lark we're accustomed to.



DUKE NUKEM FOREVER - 2007

Gameplay clips are thin on the ground, so we don't see anything new here. It's likely this was when Duke Nukem Forever was being battered into release state, with the final models of the Octobrain and Pig-cops showing up for the first time.



breed of cinematic shooters (*Modern Warfare*, *Battlefield*, *Homefront*). Silverman doesn't want to get drawn into the argument of whether modern-day Duke Nukem Forever is any good, having not played it. "I was not too involved with the content of Duke," he says. "I can only comment on the Build engine. They rarely suggested ideas that weren't already in some other game, such as *Quake*." He does, surprisingly, suggest that it was multiplayer and not single-player that created the Duke legacy to begin with.

Likewise, Hornback hasn't played Duke Nukem Forever but he's followed its progress ("I have read many of the reviews, including *Play* magazine's") and he thinks that Duke Nukem could be updated to fit into modern gaming's new era. "I haven't played Duke Nukem Forever because I've been busy working on *Din's Curse* but I believe Duke can be brought into the 21st Century," he says. "It will take a bit of clear thinking, but I believe that Gearbox can take Duke to the next level. For example, James Bond is still quite popular and is the only character I know who could emerge from a horrific fight still wearing a neatly pressed tuxedo. Bond has been updated over the years, and Duke should receive the same treatment. Fans of the franchise would appreciate it."

Yet the last word falls to Greg Malone, who feels that while critics may have been unfair, it was also the fault of those who took over Duke Nukem Forever for not coming up with a good enough game. "I do wish the Duke Nukem Forever developers better long-term luck than they seem to have had so far, in terms of the mixed reception," he says. "I know they must've put in a tremendous amount of effort. It is possible that they were too close to the trees to see the forest in terms of making it a fun game, and, as I said earlier, they may have relied too much on the potty-mouth gimmick for the game's own good."

"I do suspect that with the infamous 15-year spectacle of *DNF* (also known as *Did Not Finish*) struggling to reach the market, the reviewers have been sharpening their knives in anticipation of finding fault with the game. That said, again, it's up to the designers to counter that possibility with an extraordinary design effort."

MORALE WAS LOW

There are mixed stories about times working at 3D Realms, with the most illuminating coming from Ken Silverman. "I was the engine guy," he says. "My obsession was all about sectors and frame rate, and not what Duke eats for breakfast on level 17. It was great working with a team of people with a similar drive and goal. I loved seeing others show off their latest stuff. It was also a lot of fun doing network 'testing'. On the bad side, I hated asking people for rides, as I was too young to rent a car. Sometimes I didn't eat enough and went home hungry. With multiple teams in the same building, many people stole ideas and feelings were hurt. What I remember most is George Broussard sitting behind someone, stealing a fry, sipping his coke, and saying 'cool' to something while not appreciating the work that went into it."

We then ask what he thinks of Duke Nukem Forever now it's out. "I would like to wish success to Allen Blum (assistant director). Beyond that, I don't really care. I have not played the game." Ouch.

Yet most of the team seems to have got along. Demaret says he still talks to some of the old Duke Nukem guys and happily reels off anecdotes off his time there. "I'm a French guy and as you know we love eating food and baguettes," says Demaret, happily conforming to stereotype. "Having to live in Dallas was really hard for me. One day Richard Gray (*Duke Nukem 3D* level designer) and I went to a sandwich store named Subway. Of course, I'd never heard of it. I saw what was on display and the different 'breads' that they had on display, I immediately said out loud 'that eez not bread, that eez shit!' with a typical French accent! I was really shocked because we love bread so much in France. Richard laughed his ass off and told that story to the whole team... we always talk about that episode."

IT JUST WASN'T THAT GOOD

But ultimately, it comes down to one thing – Duke Nukem Forever just isn't that good. The pacing is poor, the difficulty uneven and the execution awful. It falls awkwardly between old-school first-person shooters (*Unreal Tournament III*, *Serious Sam 3*) and the new modern



2846 - ANT/54

Use the **SciFiNow** flowchart to find out...



PLAY Preview

点検

Playing bad games so you don't have to

Including: Aliens: Colonial Marines *is getting vicious* /// Final Fantasy XIII-2 – *how long is the tutorial?* /// Amy – *not a game about Sonic's girlfriend thankfully*

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Game over, man

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Deus Ex, Metro, Saints Row: The Third

on preview



56 Battlefield 3 PS3

PC versus console debate opened...



58 Metal Gear Solid HD PS3

Now in dazzling, beautiful HD-vision



62 Final Fantasy XIII-2 PS3

Hour of hands-on across four pages

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PREVIEW

The games that will shape the future of PlayStation



PITCHFORD: I'M FREAKING OUT!

The Gearbox boss is pretty damn excited

GEARBOX CEO RANDY Pitchford was in high spirits during the demo. "I'm freaking out because we're making an *Aliens* game, dude!" he shouts. "We're making an *Aliens* game! I've been stealing from *Aliens* my entire career. I'm not kidding! When one of my Gearbox co-founders, Brian Martel, and I first met we were working on *Duke Nukem*. Remember in *Duke Nukem*, there are facehuggers and all the alien walls are borrowed from Giger's artwork from the first film. After we founded Gearbox, some of our first games were all of the *Half-Life* expansions. *Half-Life* had headcrabs and if you look at the alien designs we added, you can see the *Alien* inspirations."



Someone has the upper hand in this situation, we reckon.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Drop-in, drop-out co-op for up to four players.
- New xenomorph types including the Crusher.
- Multiplayer outside of co-op 'not being discussed yet'.
- It's got welding in it!

READ ME

Set after *Aliens 3*, *Colonial Marines* picks up the story after the atmosphere processor explosion destroys Hadley's Hope at the end of *Aliens*.

RELEASE DATE: Q2 2012

Aliens: Colonial Marines

● The Crusher alien versus the cargo bay loader. Who wins? Guess. It's an easy answer

Don't call it a comeback...

PS3

Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. Beepbeepbeepbeep. That's not quite how it sounds, obviously, yet there's no mistaking the ominous ping of *that* trademark motion tracker. It comes as we see two colonial marines nervously making their way through Hadley's Hope, before snapping into defensive positions as the beeping begins. And the beeping gets faster. And faster. And faster. A grate falls from the ceiling air duct with a loud clatter and...

Let's recap. Announced by Sega in February 2008, *Aliens: Colonial Marines* arrived on a wave of hype and PR gusto. Aliens! Marines! Gearbox Software! High fives all round! Then there was nothing. *Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway* rolled off the Gearbox Software production line. *Borderlands* followed that. Gearbox even found time to bring *Duke Nukem Forever* back to life. Throughout all of this, not a single word about the colonial marines of 2008, apparently forgotten as their pulse rifles grew dusty with only *Aliens Vs Predator* to keep them company.

So, having *Aliens: Colonial Marines* burst into life again without warning is exciting stuff. Aliens! Marines! Gearbox Software! High fives all round! This time, some three years later, **Play** is shown actual gameplay as well. *Colonial Marines* takes place after *Aliens 3*, with a search and rescue team sent to the Hadley's Hope colony to look for Ripley, Hicks, Hudson and the rest of the crew, who went missing

following the events of *Aliens*. The game won't be limited to the same areas seen in the movie – at least a quarter of the game's locale will be unused material from *Aliens*.

The demo begins with two marines gingerly picking their way through the Hadley's Hope wreckage. The lighting is typical *Aliens* – moody and punctuated by dim red emergency lights – while the only sounds that can be heard alongside nervous footsteps are bass swells and metal groaning under the weight of Hadley's Hope. Then there's another sound that joins them. Beeping.

It's inevitable what's going to happen and sure enough, the beeping gets faster until it gives way to a huge crash and xenomorphs ambush. Based on the designs seen in *Aliens*, the creatures bound about the floor, scuttle along the ceiling and try to attack from the sides. Marines shouting, aliens screaming, gunfire; it's chaos. The ambush ends when an alien charges the player and knocks him through a hole in the wall created by the atmosphere processor explosion to the muddy ground outside, a sort of junkyard area. What follows is a QTE as the alien and marine wrestle – we'll reserve judgement on how the QTE plays out until we try it ourselves but it doesn't seem too out of place.

Then a new xenomorph makes its presence known. Called the Crusher, this giant alien has a massive, flat dome-shaped head, which it uses as

a battering ram. It jumps down into the muddy arena the marines find themselves in but their gunfire has no effect. No choice but to run. Everything rattles along at lightning speed from this point on. The Crusher occasionally catches up, only to have its attention diverted by a nearby marine, which it kills instead in an explosion of blood. Other times, it's slowed down by metal structures that the creature's bulky size forces it to ram through. Eventually, you reach the safety of a nearby base, the thick, metal doors tested by the Crusher's head. The dull thudding of it trying to ram through the doors stops and the motion tracker shows it leaving.

Attention to detail, polish, authenticity and dramatic, tense set pieces – this is the *Aliens* game we've been waiting for

There's momentary quiet as you meet up with fellow marines. You can switch weapons here – your weapon loadout ultimately dictates your 'class' – and we're reminded by Gearbox that the game features drop-in, drop-out co-op. Your objective is to drop a gun turret in a nearby tunnel to hold off an upcoming xenomorph ambush. The ambush begins and the gun turret holds up but eventually, the sheer number of aliens overcome it. The small base is overrun by xenomorphs. You catch glimpses of marines being dragged away through doors you run

past as surviving marines scramble to the loading bay.

Welding the door shut behind you, you can see other marines strap themselves into a cargo loader as they brace themselves for the next attack. There's more thudding on the huge cargo doors and one corner of it gives way slightly, xenomorphs spilling into the room through the tiny gap where it's peeled open. It's absolute anarchy at this point. With the cargo bay lights illuminating the entire room, you can soak in the detail – we saw a small battle break out in the corner of the bay between a power loader marine and the five xenomorphs scrambling all over it, the power loader eventually

toppling before his gurgled death scream can be heard over the chaos. Then there's a loud thud. And another. Which can only mean... the Crusher smashes into the cargo bay and grabs the player by the throat. Demo ends. **Play** is exhausted. Attention to detail, polish, authenticity and dramatic, tense set pieces – this is the *Aliens* game we've been waiting for.

Aliens: Colonial Marines is being developed by Gearbox Software, the clever chaps behind *Borderlands*, *Brothers In Arms* and... *Duke Nukem Forever*. Ahem. Check out gearboxsoftware.com for more updates.

WE'VE GOT A GAME THAT FEELS LIKE THE FILM

Aliens: Colonial Marines is back. But where has it been? That question, and all the others about Sega's mysterious title, are answered by Gearbox in an exclusive interview...



BRIAN COZZENS

Minister of art,
Gearbox Software

Where has *Aliens: Colonial Marines* been?

Oh yeah, the million dollar question! Well, when we presented, a lot of people mentioned the *Game Informer* article we did a while back. That was a prototype, you saw. Since then, we've been exploring our options with the game. We've recently just ramped our team up for production and that's where we're at with the game.

Wikipedia said that the game was delayed following Gearbox lay-offs in 2008.

No no no.

That's Wikipedia for you.

[laughs] Yeah, anyone can dogpile on Wikipedia.

So it's not that the schedule's been delayed, it's just been off the radar since the announcement?

Yeah. Well, we're really excited about the opportunity so we put the press release out a little prematurely, I would say. But we were all so excited, we wanted to tell the world about it. Because the franchise is so complex and we want to do it so much justice, we wanted to spend our time prototyping, investigating and exploring all our options to make something that was really true to the experience from the films.

What input does 20th Century Fox have?

They're really involved. They're as passionate about it as us as well as Sega. So when we

come up with concepts and we come up with level design, we'll show those to Fox and give them demonstrations and they'll give their feedback to us. You know, 'hey, can we get this head larger?' or 'can we get this level to feel like something more from the film?' Sometimes they'll throw some more information our way like photos from the set that we found. So it's a collaborative effort.

Fans are going to see areas they never got to see before but they're true to when it was crafted back in the Eighties

I've heard that some of the game will be based on unused bits of the film.

Yeah, Syd Mead did a lot of concept art for scenes that were never shown in the film, like the showers and other parts of the mess hall you didn't see. They kicked all that stuff over to us along with set photos. So we're working within the canon to be as accurate as possible and it'll be really cool for fans because they're going to see areas they never got to see before but they're true to when it was crafted back in the Eighties.

How much of the game would you say is unused material?

Cameron ended up using a lot of the ideas that they put on the table but I would probably say the content we got from Fox is probably about 20 to 30 per cent of areas that the fans never got to see that they never got to shoot for the film. It's a not a huge percentage but it's

enough that fans will be like, 'oh my god, I never got to see the showers of Sulaco' but that was something that was designed by Syd Mead that we never got to see, that we'll have.

For the sake of credibility it helps, too.

Oh absolutely. And we've been working with Syd Mead and other concept artists who have worked on the *Aliens* franchise who are involved with our production. As well as, originally, Brian Martel had met with Ridley Scott himself and went through the storyboards and Ridley Scott imparted his

knowledge to Gearbox on what he believes the *Alien* franchise to be. We also met with ADI who did all the special effects for all the *Aliens* films, we met with them in California. So in a roundabout way, we've had this blessing from all these people from the production.

So what input did ADI have with the game?

They basically told us how they did all the special effects and when they were creating the creatures, what they believed parts of the creatures to be. We had this really awesome dialogue for about 30 minutes about what the tubiles on the back of the xenomorphs were supposed to do. They always theorised that that would blow the cocooning materials out the tubiles. That's where that came from. That's where it was secreted, not from the mouth, from the tubiles on the back. And I was like, well I'll be damned, that's fucking awesome!





In the demo, you showed off the new Crusher alien. Was that a Fox creation or a Gearbox creation?

A Gearbox creation. Obviously for the time we've been prototyping and exploring ideas, it became obvious we couldn't rely on just one xenomorph type, right? That would get old. The one you've seen in the demo is the xenomorph soldier, which is heavily influenced by Cameron's alien because each film has its own type of xenomorph type. We have the scout in *Alien*, the dog-like xenomorph that's in *Aliens 3*, and so on. But we couldn't have just one xeno type as that would get old for gameplay, so we had to acknowledge that we were going to have to explore other xenomorph options. So that's just a little preview of what else is to come. We're pretty proud of the Crusher but we want to lean even further with that while remaining true to the franchise.

Is the story for *Aliens: Colonial Marines* written in-house or did you draft in *Aliens* writers?

Well, we did work with Thompson and Weddle. I don't know if you watched *Battlestar Galactica*? The new one? But the main writers on *Battlestar Galactica* came in and wrote a bunch of the story for us. We're pulling from that as well as crafting our own internally. We have a lot of really talented writers. I think we've even managed to get a few awards for our efforts. So we're really excited about what we're doing but basically yeah, we're coming up with the story ourselves. ➤

● This is the start of the xenomorphs versus gun turret battle that leads to things going wrong.

● The writers from *Battlestar Galactica* have been drafted in for *Aliens: CM's* story.



PREVIEW



● The squad-based tactics of *Brothers In Arms* were originally intended to feature in *Colonial Marines* but didn't work as well as Gearbox had hoped.

➤ I want to clarify what Randy said in the demo – this serves as a sequel to *Aliens*?

This is more... this happens after *Aliens* 3. Really. But the thing with all the films... we're not paying attention to *Aliens* 4 because it happens so far into the future. You know, hundreds of years or whatever.

And it's not that good.

Yeah, well... [laughs]. If you watch it enough, it's not too bad. It's got a bit of the humour in it that I think is a bit inappropriate... but *Alien* was more like survival-horror, right? Where it was a bunch of people on a ship who had to deal with this one threat and that was scary. Then James Cameron came along and made *Aliens* and was like, 'okay, this is what it's like to have a horde'. Like, here we have the hive, and so on. *Aliens* 3 tried to go back to the survival-horror element. But for fans of us, when I saw it in the cinema, I was already on the high of *Aliens*. I wanted to see that and go further. I don't know if anyone remembers but they put out a teaser, a little bit after *Aliens* was released, playing with the idea of *Aliens* coming to Earth. And they never did

People will be like, 'oh my god, we've got a game that actually feels like the film!' That's the reception we expect

that. Instead they made *Aliens* 3. So I think a number of fans were a bit disappointed. Not that *Aliens* 3 wasn't awesome or anything, it was David Fincher and he's a great guy. It's just we were expecting to see the continuation of that storyline. So we're really focusing on taking *Aliens*, the second one, and going with that feel because it was really the focus of colonial marines and obviously our game is called *Colonial Marines* because we love colonial marines! We wanted to experience *Aliens* as a game, so we're using that as our main inspiration.

***Aliens* Vs *Predator* has been released since the original announcement of *Aliens*:**

Colonial Marines. What lessons did you pull from that game?

Well, xenomorphs are a particular challenge when it comes to animation and in gameplay, just selling them. In the films, all the directors have been careful filming the xenomorph's full body because it looks more like a dude in a suit than it does something that's creepy crawly that you can't identify with. There were certain animations and ways they had the xenomorphs moving through AVP that we were like, 'this is a really awesome idea that they pulled off, we're going to use that'. Other times we were like, 'okay, we see that that's not working'. We thought the infestation was a really cool idea and obviously that will inspire us. Also dialogue between the marines – things that worked and things that don't. But they definitely helped inspire us and we learned lessons that they learned.

Has the experience of working on *Borderlands* and *Duke Nukem* helped shape *Aliens: Colonial Marines*?

I would say *Borderlands* represents the Gearbox tradition of levelling up and its success has enabled us to attract additional talent. So *Borderlands* has definitely had an influence. It's helped the studio, it's helped a lot of the creators at Gearbox become more confident and it's helped us establish winning formulas, if you will. So I would definitely say *Borderlands* and its success has definitely had an influence. Just by having some of the developers on *Borderlands* incorporated in *Aliens: Colonial Marines* it's going to help it be a more solid game.

And *Duke Nukem*?

No, I wouldn't say that it had much of an influence. That title was more about wrapping it up with a bow on it and getting out the door. 3D Realms and Triptych already did a lot of the work. We just got it out to fans.

What would you say the main change has been since the original announcement? Not even in terms of what was revealed but just internal changes to the game.

The squad-based tactics. We were really well known for *Brothers In Arms*, which is a tactics-based shooter. You could command your guys and tell them to do things. Being colonial marines that seemed like a good marriage, to put those things together. You know, saying, 'go weld the door!' or 'stand here while I investigate!' But it didn't work out because as Brian Martel said, you can't flank an alien. It just wasn't that enjoyable. You expected a different type of atmosphere being from the films than what you were getting with your squad-mates.

Was the idea for a specific colonial marines game borne out of you guys being a *Brothers In Arms* studio?

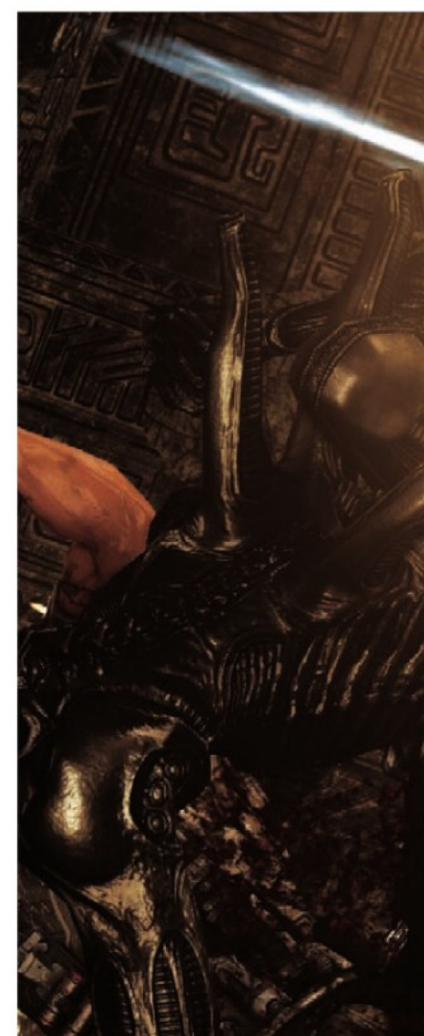
No. We're big fans of military, there's no doubt about that. That probably has an influence at some point. But basically, it just comes from the fact that most game developers grew up watching *Aliens* films and when we saw colonial marines, that was the first time we actually saw the military in space. That was such a huge inspiration for us that when it came to Gearbox and Randy Pitchford and Brian Martel, when it came to them it was like, 'what is our dream list of games to work on next?' *Aliens* was way up there. So the *Brothers In Arms* element helped us focus on the colonial marines but ultimately, it just came down to us being huge fans.

Are you talking about multiplayer today?

No. Well, drop-in, drop-out co-op.

Is that a challenge? Putting co-op in without breaking the atmosphere? I can imagine a swearsy kid jumping in wouldn't work too well in the *Aliens* atmosphere.

Yeah, yeah. Again, the time that we spent prototyping, we obviously investigated that. One of the titles we likened that to was *Left 4*





● The experience and confidence gained by Gearbox while developing *Borderlands* should help make *Colonial Marines* a more solid game, according to Cozzens.



● Gearbox has taken plenty of inspiration, both good and bad, from 2010's *Aliens Vs Predator*.

Dead. So we played *Left 4 Dead* a lot. I think I probably played a good four hours a night for months on end, doing my own fair share of... ahem, 'investigation' [laughs]. It's obviously a challenge to create a scary atmosphere with four-player co-op and a bunch of chatter but that's where it helps being colonial marines because you expect the squad to be talking to each other. I think in those instances we'll probably bump up the action more. We will try to scare you but it probably won't be the same scares you get from single-player but who knows?

But by virtue of it being a co-op game, is it harder to create the horror?

It's definitely a challenge. But we have got some really awesome scenarios and everyone will love them.

To finish then – what are your expectations in terms of how *Colonial Marines* is received and how well it does?

We've put a lot of effort into the authenticity and doing, in some cases, the mind's eye of how the fans remember the film to be. There are some things that if they're too true they'll be disappointed but there are other things we have to be true to. But the one thing we definitely feel that will be well received is what the fans think of it. Everyone who loves the *Aliens* films will love this game because it's

an *Alien* film. It's going to scare you, have all the action, you'll be part of the marines you always wanted to be part of, you're going to have the franchise elements people want to be in there, it'll be the complete package. People will be like, 'oh my god, we've got a game that actually feels like the film!' That's the reception we expect.

Do you find yourself cutting back on ideas because you're aware of the fans?

Yes. Absolutely. We always have to be really careful. Those things have to go through filters and everyone on the *Aliens: Colonial Marines* team are big fans, so we're always checking each other to make sure these things feel appropriate for the universe.

Any quick examples?

I think the xenotypes are one particular area we've had ideas come across the table that might have been great for gameplay but might not fit in the universe, so we've had to combine elements into other xenotypes to make it look appropriate, to look like it would be what Ridley Scott or Cameron or Fincher [would have] in one of their films but still give us awesome gameplay. So that's been a challenge. We've had to be very careful of what we implement that we don't get anything too corny or too stupid or that looks like it's inappropriate. ☒



RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

Battlefield 3

Lacking in 360 pees and 30 whole frames per second... OH NO

PS3 *Battlefield 3* on PC will be the superior version. That's it. That's the end of the argument. The console versions – both PS3 and Xbox 360 – will be pretty similar, and each will involve different programming techniques to get the most out of them. Functionally, though, all the games will be the same. That's the end of that argument, too.

Delicious proof pie that *Battlefield 3* is going to be a heavyweight online contender

So we're relegated to a 'mere' 30 frames per second and a 'mere' 720p resolution. So what? Half of us wouldn't even be able to notice what frame rate something was running at, and even less would be able to see what kind of pixel count was currently displayed on a screen without being told beforehand. If you haven't seen the footage of *Battlefield 3* running on PS3 on *The Jimmy Fallon Show*, look it up. We'll wait here while you watch it...

Seen it? Good. So what does it look like? Pretty bloody brilliant? Exactly. Five-year-old hardware running a game designed for cutting-edge PC rigs, still managing to look, sound and run that good. That's something to be excited about, rather than pissing your life away moaning about the lost pixels you're never going to see on your shiny TV.

What we've seen of *Battlefield 3* so far fills us with glee. The pitched tank battle of E3 showed the kind of experience that, while not the best thing to watch, will certainly be a lot of fun to play. The PlayStation 3 demo has shown us the effectiveness of destructibility during on-foot conflict. The multiplayer has shown us that... well, DICE is really good at making multiplayer games – though we're still hopeful we'll see some bigger maps in future.

An interesting addition to multiplayer is the use of suppressing fire. While in the past the support class simply meant 'a bloke with



"Do you want to go for a coffee some time?"

a light machine gun', in *Battlefield 3* it means 'bloke who can have a tangible impact in a firefight by laying down suppressing fire'. Laying down a face of fire on opposing forces will disorient enemy players by limiting their vision and distorting their audio – a genuine, tangible cause-and-effect situation and one support players are rewarded for with lovely XP, just like with any other supporting actions.

It is touches like these that show DICE's continuing, intelligent commitment to multiplayer even though this time around there will be a robust single-player game. Other little touches, like how there won't be enter/exit animations for vehicles – it ruins the flow of multiplayer, and slows things down according to the development team – are just extra proof on top of an already delicious proof pie

that *Battlefield 3* is going to be a heavyweight online contender.

Obviously *Battlefield 3* has *Modern Warfare 3* in its sights – so much so that EA honcho John Riccitiello has been making thinly veiled barbed comments about the competition left, right and centre. If *Bad Company 2* and *Medal Of Honor* were EA dipping its toes in the water, *Battlefield 3* is a head first dive straight into the deep end.

We're being uncharacteristically non-critical when it comes to *Battlefield 3*, even though we haven't been able to sit down with it and blitz through single and multiplayer for 400 hours. But when you're presented with the next 'proper' entry in a fantastic series, from an established developer of these types of games, supported by one of the biggest publishers in the world and so far registering a fair bit of 'wow' on the reaction Richter scale... well, just let us be blindly enthusiastic about this one, okay? Okay.

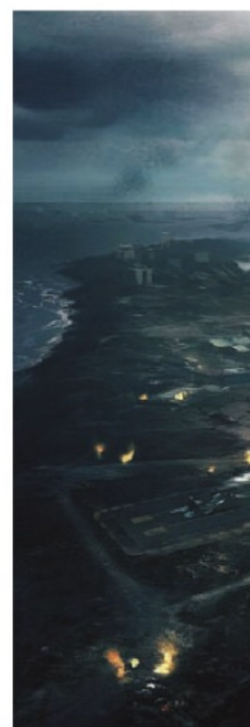
Battlefield 3 is being developed by DICE. Check out www.battlefield.com for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- PC or no, it looks brilliant.
- DICE has proven itself adept at making online shooters.
- Andy McNab!
- Real, proper, actual competition for *MW3* is a good thing.

READ ME

Battlefield 3 is the first 'pure' *Battlefield* game on console, and is a sequel to, well, *Battlefield 2*, released back in 2005.





IN-DEPTH

Survey says...



Tanks: fun to play, less fun to watch.



Insert 'jumping the barrier' joke here.

I'M ANDY MCNAB...

I'm Andie MacDowell...

WHEN YOU WANT expert input on your game – a game about, like, war and stuff – who would you turn to? Andy McNab, obviously. So that's what DICE has done with *Battlefield 3*, using the finely honed skills of the man-with-no-face to make sure the motion-capture actors really are That Damn Good.



In case you're unaware, McNab was in the SAS for about ten years, which means he's a lot more qualified to tell people how to do this stuff than most other people are. It also means the mocap is likely to be very authentic. Which is sure to appeal to the anal war fans out there.



Yes, this is the PC version. Sorry.

PREVIEW

Number two

The tricky second attempt, EXCEPT IN HD

Back in the heady days of The Past, *Play* was one of the few publications out there that had the balls to give *MGS 2: Sons Of Liberty* the score it deserved. It worked. It was good. But it wasn't the be-all and end-all that we expected. Raiden was a bit pump and the story was the worst a *Metal Gear* story has ever been, but we still have a special place in our heart for the whole thing.

So we welcome the new, HD'd up version of *MGS 2* with all that entails: more graphics, better graphics, deeper graphicking and a whole host of other things that have something to do with graphics.

RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

Metal Gear Solid HD Collection

Let's all say it together: "METAL GEAR?!"



Finally, an excuse to re-play *Metal Gear Solid 2* (81%, *Play* 87) without having our minds stunk up with the thought we should be playing a new release. We can finally judge Raiden as a main character with the benefit of hindsight, rather than the disadvantage of being surprised by him suddenly taking over from Solid Snake a couple of hours into the game (SPOILER).

Yes, folks, the *Metal Gear Solid HD Collection* will include *MGS 2*, *MGS 3* and *MGS: Peace Walker* for you to lose yourself in their collective incomprehensible babble. We could

spend some time here whining that the first game isn't in the package, nor is the fourth, nor are the other spin-offs, but then who *actually* cares? *Sneak Eater* and *Peace Walker* are the two best in the series, they're getting tarted up a bit and – as we said up

there – it means we'll actually bother to play through *Sons Of Liberty* at least one more time. Maybe then we'll understand it. Or not.

Metal Gear Solid HD Collection is being ported by both Kojima Productions and Bluepoint Games. Check out www.konami.jp/gs/kojima_pro for more details.

Lose yourself in the MGS series' incomprehensible babble

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



Three *Metal Gear Solid* games on one disc. Wondrous!

They're unlikely to look spectacular, but you can't argue with tarted-up looks.



An extra analogue stick on *Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker*. Success!

Oh, we forgot to mention there's Trophy support, too. Winner!

READ ME

The first letter I've ever had printed in a games magazine was one he wrote to *Play*, concerning their *Metal Gear Solid 2* score. No, really.



Number three

The trickier third attempt, EXCEPT IN HD

Sneak Eater, the third game in the main series, was awarded 89% in *Play* 127, though, thinking about it, we're not entirely sure why. In fact, we'll just go with the score for the updated version, *Subsistence*, in *Play* 145 (94%). Why? Well *Sneak Eater* is the best game in the *MGS* series, and we have a few scores to choose from so it's our damn prerogative. In. Your. Face. Oh, also because it's *Subsistence* that comes in this package.

Not only will the game benefit from a tidy upgrade to 720p, just like the other games, but it will also run at 60fps – something the original release didn't do, if our collective memory serves us.





Peace Walker

The trickiest portable effort, EXCEPT IN HD

Even though it came out a while ago now, we still have *Peace Walker* fresh in the memory. Not only is it one of the best reasons to own a PSP, it's also one of the best *Metal Gear Solid* games in the series – if you demand numbers, here be they: 92% in **Play 193**. Happy now? Good.

Peace Walker will likely see the most updates and changes from its initial rollout, bringing with it as it does some extra pad-buttons to throw into this extravaganza. Oh, and the second analogue stick, which will actually change the game a fair bit and make it easier to play.



BIG SCREEN

Transferring

Stupid word, great feature

Really, it is a stupid word and we think we probably hate it. Unfortunately, it looks like we'll have to use it as it's the kind of thing worth talking about. Basically, it's the whole 'save your game and carry on playing it on the portable device' thing we've heard so much about.

Saving *Peace Walker*, you can transfer the file to your PSP and carry on where you left off. Saving *MGS 2* or *MGS 3*, you can transfer the file to your Vita and carry on where you left off. What's not to like? Yes, that does mean numbers two and three will work on Vita, in case you weren't already aware.



Numero uno

The not-as-tricky first attempt, NOT IN HD (yet)

You'll have noticed there's no *Metal Gear Solid 4* in this collection, but that's for an obvious reason. It's already HD, namely. But the lack of the original *Metal Gear Solid* did take some by surprise, with people expecting a collection of *Metal Gear Solid* games to include *Metal Gear Solid*. Apparently not.

But fear not, for Konami hasn't completely forgotten about the 1998 original (which we reappraised at 93% in **Play 187**). No, there are tentative, vague and probably-not-real plans afoot to not just give the original some HD polish but to actually tear it apart and rebuild it. New graphics, new story, new *game* – it's the kind of tease we can get on board with.



VOUCH(ER) FOR THAT

Buying things is so passé

THERE ARE WORDS and sentences floating around indicating the *MGS Collection* will come with a voucher to download either the original *MGS* (in Japan) or one to download *Peace Walker* (everywhere else). Hopefully this is the case, as we can't see too many people bothering to buy *Peace Walker* just for the novelty of carrying their saves on during long bus rides. Long train rides, on the other hand...



✓ Parallel story

It's only fair to talk about the story a bit, we suppose. *Darksiders II* isn't a sequel or prequel – it's a parallel. Running alongside War's original tale of Armageddon being triggered too early and him being blamed, this time around we get Death's story as he tries to uncover what he believes is a conspiracy against his Horseman brother. Mainly by killing things, we'd imagine. Well, he *is* Death. If you like your comic-book stories of big super-men killing things and sounding angry all the time, this is likely to appeal.

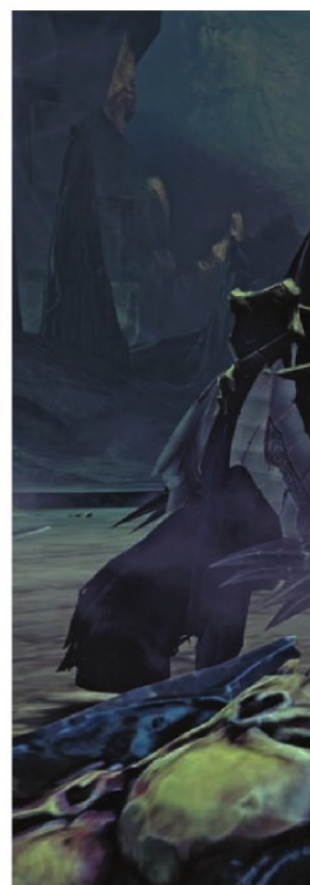
✓ My lovely horse

Death will have access to his little poppo from the very start of the game – the adorably named Despair (Ian's next dog's name: decided). This hooven-spawn of the underworld certainly looks the part, with its skin all 'not there' and a general sense of zombiefication about it. With the increased size of *Darksiders II* it makes sense that your transport is available from the beginning – nobody wants to slowly plod around an open world when they could be riding in zombie-ish-horse style. We already prefer it to Ruin, War's horse.



✓ Death vs War

The change in main character for *Darksiders II* is more than just a cosmetic one, or one brought about purely for story reasons. No, the replacement of War with Death brings with it a nimbler, quicker character and so a different style of play. Unlike War's lumbering ox technique, as it was probably called, Death dances around the (under)world, tearing it up with his dual mini-scythes. Though he is still capable of wielding *massive hammers*, naturally. Aside from combat, it should mean more fun with platforming sections, too.



✓ Role-playing? Loot? Great!

It's a decision that makes sense: adding more RPG features to the *Darksiders* formula. But what does that mean in real terms? Well, more numbers, obviously, but best of all it means *loot*. We, as human beings with souls, love loot. Loot is great. Loot makes the world loot loot. Loot. Sorry, got a bit looted away there. More of the traditional role-playing touches will surely mean more carrots-on-sticks pushing you through the game and, love it or hate it, a more needlessly addictive experience throughout.

✗ But does anyone care?

Darksiders II's main issue is the fact it's a *Darksiders* game. Yes, that's a weird problem. See, while we – like so many other correct people – rightly gave the original a very good score of 83% in *Play* 188, there still seems to be an attitude of 'who cares?' directed at the game from a number of gamers. They should be giving it a chance, but a lot haven't, and while we're more than happy to see a new *Darksiders*, this apparent apathy could bite number two in the backside.

Darksiders II is being developed by Vigil Games. Check out www.vigilgames.com for more details.

✓ More sequels?

We actually didn't expect to see a *Darksiders II*, so it was a pleasant surprise when it was finally confirmed as being real. And its coming has also arrived hand-in-hand with more talk of future games in the series, likely involving the other two Horsemen, Fury and Strife. Also nattered about by those at Vigil is the possibility of multiplayer – something they apparently wanted for this game, but not quite crammed in. For now, we'll spend our time concentrating on this game instead of a nonexistent future game.

RELEASE DATE: TBC 2012

Darksiders II



Step one, War. Step two, Death. Logical

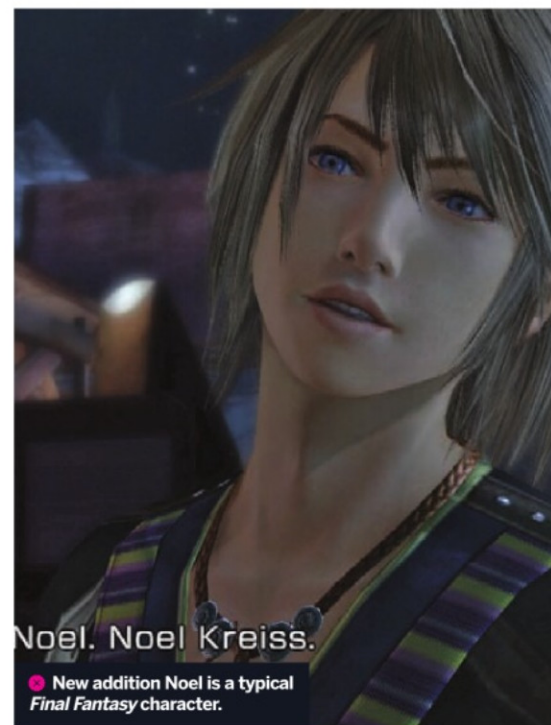
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- More focus on RPG elements makes us very happy.
- Absolutely massive, meaning more fun times and places to explore.
- More Joe Mad artwork = more MASSIVE MEN AND WEAPONS.
- A second chance for you to all get on the *Darksiders*... train... or something.

READ ME

Vigil Games only has one release under its belt – the original *Darksiders*. Aside from the sequel ('parallel'), it is also working on *Warhammer: Dark Millennium Online*.

PREVIEW



LIVETRIGGER

What would you choose?

ALYSSA, YOUR HELPING advisor throughout the ruins, notifies you of a machine in the tunnels that could help you defeat Atlas. At this point, LiveTrigger kicks in, which gives you an option on what you reply. The options are:

What does Mog think?

What does Alyssa think?

I live in the moment

I'm not sure

You may be thinking you know the right answer but we can tell you it's definitely not 'I live in the moment', after which we charged Atlas and got splattered by a stray fist. Oops.





RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2012

Final Fantasy XIII-2

Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger



Yes, it's faster. Yes, it gets to the meaty gameplay straight away. Yes, it has learnt its lesson. And yes, these questions are annoying. It's okay, we'll tell you everything you need to know, you don't have ask. Lord knows that Square Enix is desperate for us to get the message out there that the infamous 20-hour slog from 'tutorial' stage to 'having fun' stage that slowed down *Final Fantasy XIII* is gone. Dead. Finished. Consigned to the dustbin of history labelled Failed Experiments In The *Final Fantasy* Series, where it's sharing sob-stories with *Final Fantasy VIII*'s Draw system and *Final Fantasy XIV*'s... everything.

That's because after listening to feedback from the press and the players, *Final Fantasy XIII-2* is a game of improvements. The tempo is faster. Platforming introduced. Player choice has been gently massaged into the system. Moogles now play a big part, QTEs kick in during boss battles and there's a whole new combat subset of options devoted to capturing enemies and having them help you attack. There is a lot to talk about. But as this is a hands-on session we're reporting, let's start right at the beginning.

We begin 'near the start of the game' in archaeological ruins that Square Enix hasn't announced details of yet, with Serah Farron and Noel Kreiss running into the open. Serah is now the starring character, as she

searches for her sister Lightning following the events of *Final Fantasy XIII* (no spoilers on why, just in case you haven't played it). Her weapon is... hmmm. How best explain this? Serah followed by a Moogle called Mog – imagine a pink, flying teddy bear with a red ball above its head if you're not familiar – and Mog turns into Serah's bow and arrow when combat kicks in. Of course it does!

As for Noel, he's a typical *Final Fantasy* hero wearing the fingerprints of Tetsuya Nomura's hallmark design. Imagine a cross between Cloud, Tidus and *Kingdom Hearts*' Sora. He fights with a sword, wears his pants down low and... Christ. This is turning into a rap song. All you need to know is Noel ticks the character design boxes of most leading Squenix heroes – emo hair, slight build, eccentric fashion sense and a voice that swerves between assured and whiny more often than a younger sibling. Love him or hate him, he's typical *Final Fantasy*.

So Serah, Noel and Mog run through the ruins where a monstrous, blue hand is poking out of the ground, towering above the trio. There's scaffolding built around the hand suggesting it's been there a while. Yet the three adventurers are called into action when the hand moves and rocks the ruins, as invisible giant Atlas forms around it. This is the beginning of our hands-on with *Final Fantasy XIII-2* and we're already thrown into

battle against a boss we can't even see, bar its giant hand, which is clenched into a fist and threatening to slam into the party. Crumbs.

Saying 'crumbs' might date the **Play** team back to prehistoric times, it's not been that long since *Final Fantasy XIII* was warming up our PlayStation 3, so given the battle system in *Final Fantasy XIII-2* is largely the same as its predecessor, instinct quickly kicks in. The Paradigm Shifts have returned with the same classes such as Commando, Ravager, Medic and so on. You can set yourself to Auto-battle and fire off attacks at

idea is that you don't settle into the gentle, hypnotic rhythm that *Final Fantasy XIII* was prone to.

The battle grinds on and Serah's party is soon joined by blimps that hover into view. Another QTE demands you mash (X) to fill a circular prompt and doing so sees the blimps drop bombs on Atlas. Air strikes! In a *Final Fantasy* game! Cue an extremely tenuous link to *Call Of Duty* gameplay mechanics that we're definitely not just mentioning for SEO purposes when we upload this preview online. Job done, the blimps roll onwards and Atlas retreats,

The 20-hour slog from 'tutorial' stage to 'having fun' stage is gone

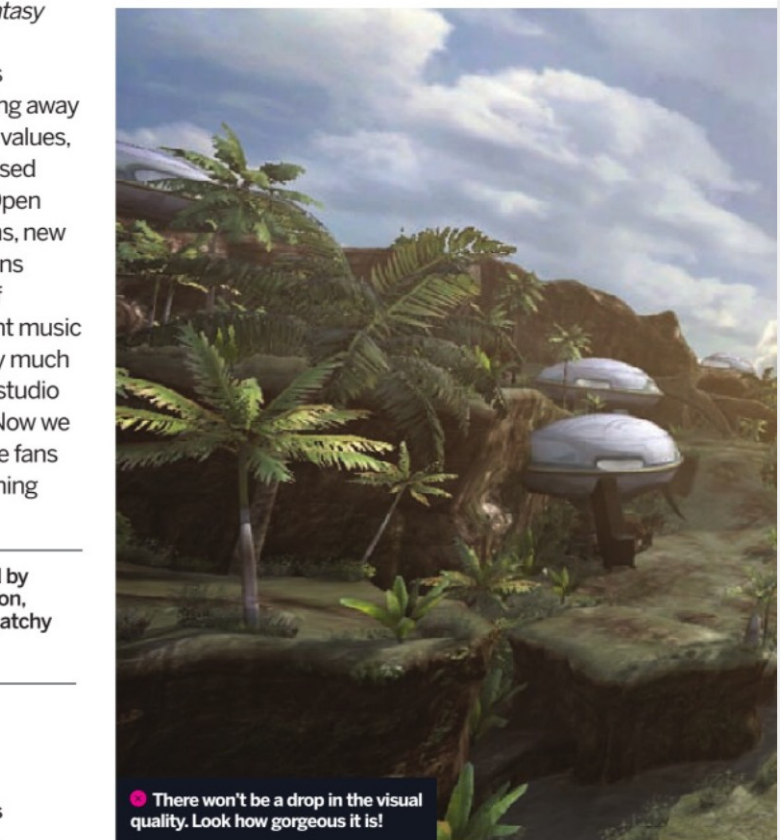
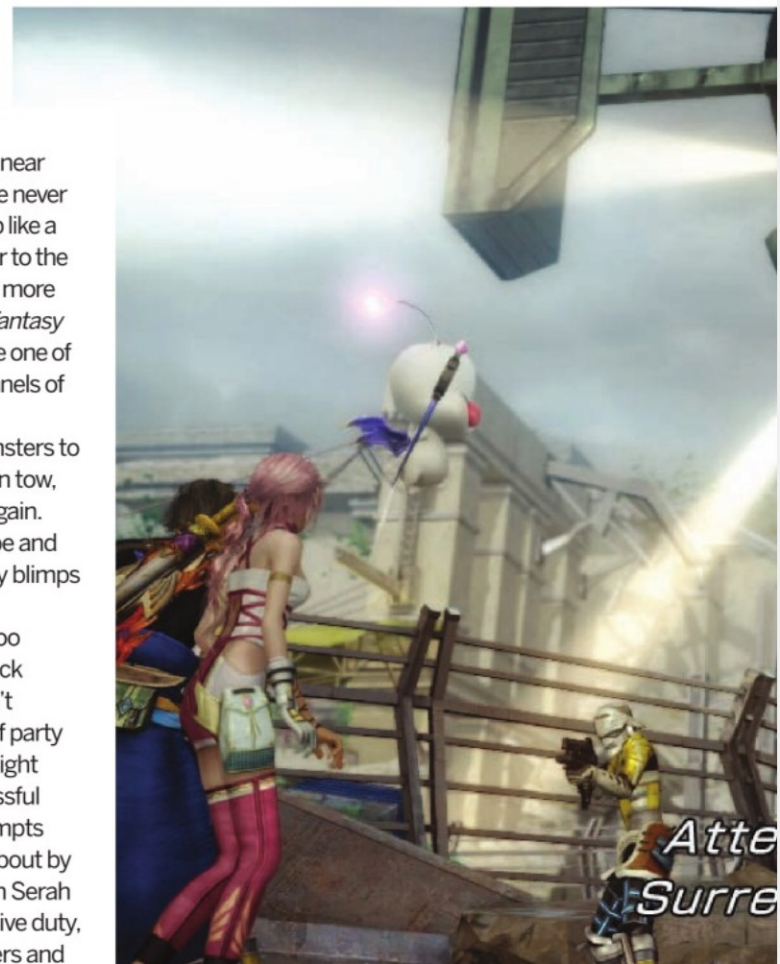
Atlas, until there's a sudden break in the action.

Noel runs up Atlas's arm and finds himself having to dodge a sudden swipe from the giant boss. Suddenly, a symbol flashes up on the screen with Noel having to press Right on the Left analogue stick. This looks suspiciously like... Argh! A QTE! Quickquickquickquick phew. Left analogue stick flicked, Noel rolls out of harm's way. We're not sure what happens if you fail the QTE – we presume you take a hefty chunk of damage rather than Atlas scrapping Noel's innards off his arm while groaning "Ewww" a lot – but the

leaving the group to survey the carnage as scaffolding lies strewn over the ruins and disheartened workers are left to pick up the pieces. Serah's bow transforms into Mog and the trio are left to explore.

The random encounter system has changed slightly. Get close enough to an enemy and Mog Clock appears. The timer under your feet shows a clock counting down. Attack the enemy while the clock is green and you get the first strike in. Leave it too long and you'll likely hit the enemy when the clock is yellow, which is neutral status. If you leave it really long and don't bother attacking until ➤

PREVIEW



> the clock is red, not only are you incredibly slow, but your dawdling is punished as the enemy will land the first strike on you.

That was the boring GameFAQs description of how Mog Clock works. What it means is that you have to make a quick judgement call, figuring out where the enemies are when the clock springs into life and striking them. What if you leave it too late? What if you can't afford the battle? What if the enemy looks too strong? Then you can run past the encounter if you're quick enough. That might seem like a lot of words to describe a relatively simple function and that's because it is a lot of words to describe a relatively simple function yet once

The other new facet of the combat is capturing. In each area, there are

the series to our recollection was, interestingly enough, *Final Fantasy X-2* although the platforming there was regimented and stiff. At first, we thought *Final Fantasy XIII-2* would address that because you can jump anywhere and you're in ruins. "The possibilities are endless!" we would have thought to ourselves, if we weren't so miserable and thought a bit like an American advert. Unfortunately, there were enough red flags on show – clearly highlighted jump spots, invisible walls constricting areas – that platforming is likely to remain an ill-fit for the series. Shame.

At least the puzzles are coming together nicely. As part of Serah and co's attempt to take down Atlas, who re-emerges elsewhere in the ruins

are flagged up when you stray near enough with Mog. His (her? We never checked, ahem) head lights up like a firework show, as he fizzles over to the item in question. It adds a little more purpose to the world of *Final Fantasy XIII-2*, which is good if you were one of those who hated the linear tunnels of the original.

Having fought enough monsters to level up and with Flanbanero in tow, we're ready to take on Atlas again. This time, he's a formidable foe and there isn't the luxury of nearby blimps to drop bombs from above.

Even so, it doesn't matter too much. Having the extra sidekick in tow – Square Enix still hasn't confirmed the final number of party members – makes the Atlas fight much easier, as nailing successful Feral Links by getting the prompts right sees Atlas get slapped about by Flanbanero's flailing fists. With Serah set to heal and Noel on offensive duty, it's not long before Atlas withers and falls. **Play's** time with *Final Fantasy XIII-2* comes to an end.

While *Final Fantasy X-2* was lambasted by some for shifting away from traditional *Final Fantasy* values, *Final Fantasy XIII-2* will be praised for shifting back towards it. Open towns, engaging introductions, new characters, extra battle options and the same dazzling mix of stunning graphics and brilliant music underpinning it all, this is very much the project of a powerhouse studio who has listened to its fans. Now we just have to wait and see if the fans were right to demand everything they did...

Final Fantasy XIII-2 is developed by Square Enix. For more information, navigate your way through the catchy finalfantasy13-2game.com

Final Fantasy XIII-2 is very much the project of a powerhouse studio who has listened to its fans

enemies you can defeat who turn to crystals and become part of your party. We had Flanbanero (red flan with rush punches) and Stonefist (defensive armadillo-like creature) helping us after beating them in battle. You can switch between your creatures with Paradigm Shifts and build up their Feral Link, which serves as a super move of sorts.

There's also platforming. You'll notice when you first press **○** in the ritual what-do-all-these-buttons-do experimenting that Noel jumps. Jumping! In a *Final Fantasy* game! There's jumping in *Call Of Duty*, too! And the jumping here is as stilted and awkward as our cackhanded SEO attempts. The only other game that attempted jumping in

and lies in wait for your party, you can solve a temporal rift in an area known as The Void Beyond. Yes, it's a little vague and a little weird but the point of this is that it's an excuse for some puzzle solving. To solve the puzzles, you have to cross a room of collapsing platforms while hitting crystals on the way. It's not stuff that will twist your grey matter into knots but a nice change of pace regardless.

It's also worth noting that *Final Fantasy XIII-2* seems to have been shaken up to make the structure more interesting. There's an open town hub that you can roam around in following the first Atlas fight, with linear tunnels to be explored if you want to go hunting for secrets. Further to that, there are 'secret' items, which

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

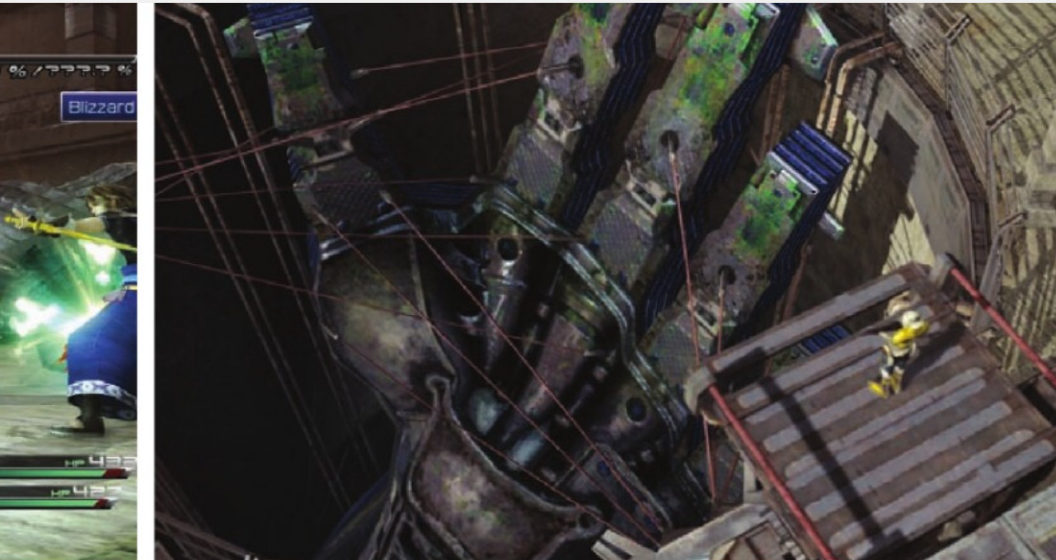
- Serah and new face Noel take the lead.
- Moogles return and will play a key part.

- LiveTrigger, Feral Link and Mog Clock new to series.
- No 20-hour 'tutorial' to kick things off this time.

READ ME

Continuing the story from *Final Fantasy XIII*, Square Enix is also positioning *Final Fantasy XIII-2* as the game the fans wanted to see.

● There won't be a drop in the visual quality. Look how gorgeous it is!



ntion, intruders.
nder immediately.



Look, it's a thing! Crashing into the thing. Out there in the thing. Okay, we confess, we don't know.



DEFEATING ATLAS

There's the easy way and the hard way

THE LIVETRIGGER EVENT before you take on Atlas is interesting in that it suggests there's no wrong answer, just answers that make things tougher for you. Ignore the machine in the tunnels and Atlas will be at full strength.

Complete the puzzle successfully and you will see a cut-scene of Atlas engaged in battle and Alyssa tells you that he has been slowed down. We asked Square Enix if there are extra rewards for deliberately choosing the wrong answer but that's still an unknown. Bah.



Paradigm Shift system from *Final Fantasy XIII* returns with the same roles.



RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception

Naughty Dog on the beta and lessons learned



Uncharted 3 is the most anticipated game of the year, so naturally **Play** did what it does best: interviewing the hell out of the people behind it to make sure they're doing their jobs.

Are they? We talk to Naughty Dog's Justin Richmond (game director) and Robert Cogburn (game designer) to find out...

You launched the *Uncharted 3* beta recently, how has it been received and how has it been going so far?

JR: In terms of launching the beta, the first day was rocky, but from then we've just sort of patched, and made sure things work the way they're supposed to, and basically just had a good time with it. We've also seen tons of feedback on the Naughty Dog forums, and on third-party forums across the internet. The overall response seems to be positive, so yeah, we're really happy with it.

Kickbacks are an interesting addition to the formula, and obviously one of the issues that come with them is balancing. How do you even begin to nail the balancing of a multiplayer game as epic as *Uncharted 3*?

JR: The QA guys will very quickly see where something is broken, because suddenly the whole company starts using a gun that is way overpowered. Where it gets tricky, though, is the subtle differences between three different guns with similar properties and targeting.

Then we have to make them feel and play differently, while maintaining a balance.

RC: The art to balancing a competitive multiplayer game is a challenge every day. One of the biggest problems is, this game is so important to us and we introduced a lot of new systems to *Uncharted 3* multiplayer.

The key is to look out for cracks in these systems, and spotting when people exploit those systems. All of this is crucial information for us, and we're still balancing it right now.

Given this is your second crack at *Uncharted* multiplayer, what key lessons did you learn from the *Uncharted 2* online component, and how has it informed your development this time around?

JR: I think the number one thing was that tweaks and balancing are always going to happen. You have to be so careful about how many things you actually change. One of the biggest things we've learned from was the 1.04 patch from *Uncharted 2*. That patch was a decision that was made across the whole company.

I think I agree with it, I thought it was a good move. Even now we see people talking about how the health is high in *Uncharted 3* – which we're not touching (laughs) – but I think there is a whole class of players that feel like the health is too high in the beta.

The reason for this isn't just because of the *Call Of Duty* and *Battlefield* effect. It's because ironically, the more health a

player has, the more it actually favours a high-calibre player, which is totally counterintuitive if you think about it.

Basically it means that a good player that can hold the reticule over another player for longer is always going to beat someone who is less skilled.

If people really like something, then you better have a damn good reason for wanting to change that, or, of course, upping the damage.

Can you give us an example of what elements you've changed so far?

RC: One of the big problems from *Uncharted 2* was that players hit a wall when levelling up pretty quick. They felt they just weren't making any progress after a certain point. I think we've tackled that pretty well, but beyond that we've also introduced plenty of other systems.

We've really opened things up, I mean, we've got interesting Medal Kickbacks, team boosters, expanded custom loadouts. Another thing we learned from *Uncharted 2* is that people like establishing their own type of play style.

JR: Yeah, and we also wanted to use the cash system in our game, and one of the things was that when you finish your

game, you receive a bunch of cash. So we now let you spend your money on paid boosters.

These are all based on market value, so that if people started buying one booster more often, we will increase the cost of it so it becomes less frequent. We had to be careful in that these boosters are only available for one or two games, instead of letting you buy it indefinitely and then hitting that same brick wall as before.

It sounds as if the content volume is just incredible. Is there any way you could quantify just how long this extends the multiplayer experience by?

RC: Oh man, wow (laughs).

JR: Well, we are going to continue adding new content after launch with DLC like treasures and new character parts as we go on.

We can't talk about that right now, but I would say the content easily amounts to hundreds and hundreds of hours. I mean you can play competitive, co-op, multiple modes and... I just can't quantify it enough.

Uncharted 3 is being developed by Naughty Dog. Check out www.unchartedthegame.com for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's *Uncharted*.
- Yes you do.
- And we all know what that means.
- Stop being difficult.

READ ME

The PS3's biggest series gets its third instalment. Will it be better than *Gears Of War*? Of bloody course it will.



● Riverdance just got real.



● Look at this and tell us it's not the best thing ever. LIAR!

BETTER WITH FRIENDS

Co-op is an absolute blast

UNCHARTED 3'S CO-OP modes might not be the most imaginative things in the world, but they're entertaining all the same. After the assault on the senses that full-blown running-and-gunning is in Team Deathmatch we like to get a bit more cerebral with the co-op game types. Only a bit more, mind: there's still that standard orgy of violence, but covering your team-mates while they plant treasures is always, always brilliant.



● The multiplayer is likely to add hundreds of hours to the *Uncharted 3* experience.



RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 2012

Inversion

Gears Of War on PlayStation! Almost. Maybe. No, not really



It may not look particularly impressive but *Inversion's* drop-in, drop-out co-op should prove popular.



How many times have you played a shooter and thought 'hey, wouldn't it be cool if the gravity could be manipulated?' Zero. Be honest. Maybe you'll think it in future now we've subconsciously inserted that phrase in your head like the Charles Xavier of videogames journalism but otherwise, zero.

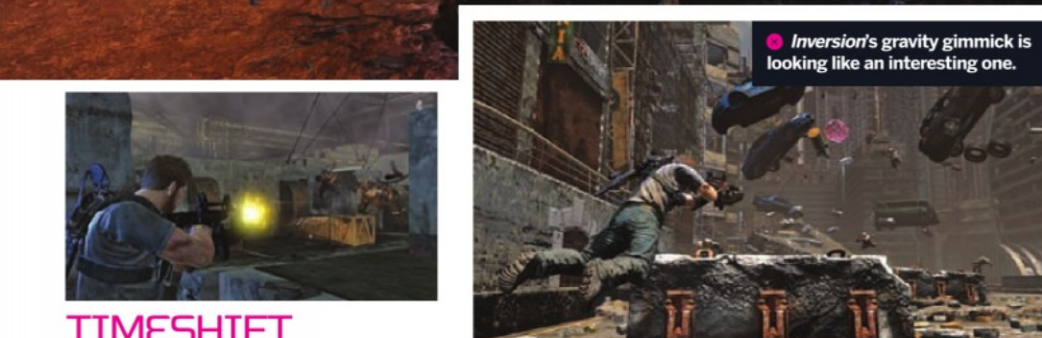
You won't think that phrase while playing *Inversion* either but you will notice how the gravity gimmick turns a fairly rudimentary *Gears Of War*-inspired title into something infinitely more interesting. You can throw what are essentially gravity bombs that send everything they hit hurtling upwards – enemies, scenery, cover, anything. While enemies harmlessly spin in midair, you can pick them apart with gunfire. Shoot their limbs. Shoot their torso. Use gravity to pull them towards you and look at their confused, fat faces as they float around before you slam them face first into nearby cover.

There's also the option to increase the gravity. Against

enemies, this pulls them down to the ground and makes them easier targets though the gravity crush alone can kill them outright. It also pulls down boxes conveniently hanging overhead, to create cover for wide-open areas. We suspect it will be used to complete puzzles as well. Increasing gravity seems boring and functional like that.

The final gravity angle added into the mix is a weird one, where you can shift your gravity at certain 'jumps' so you're fighting enemies on walls, who are also on walls, presumably because they also used the same gravity jump. Gravity jump isn't the official term, by the way. It will probably be called something like Real-Time Dynamic Gravity Rotation. Either way, it means fighting upside down or sideways. Combine all these twists and turns and you get a shooting novelty act that could be PlayStation's best take on *Gears Of War* yet.

Saber Interactive is the team behind *Inversion*, with saber3d.com the place to go for the latest updates.



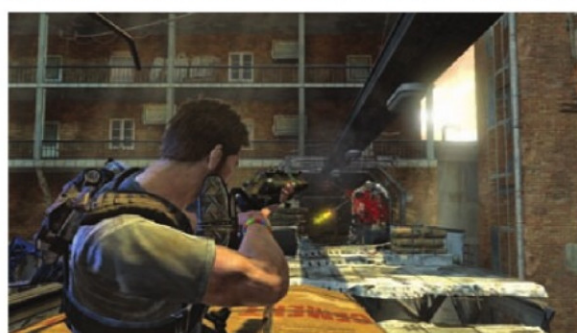
Inversion's gravity gimmick is looking like an interesting one.



TIMESHIFT

Does this look familiar to you?

REMEMBER TIMESHIFT? THE sci-fi shooter that looked awful but had an awesome time gimmick? Of course you don't because only four people in the UK bought it. The same team has returned for *Inversion* but despite rocking the same looks-awful-but-has-awesome-gimmick angle, this should find more success because it has drop-in, drop-out co-op and the gravity manipulation thing? Way more fun. Trust us.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Drop-in, drop-out co-op. Why has no-one come up with a catchier name yet?
- Increase or decrease gravity using your *Ghostbusters*-esque backpack.
- Surprisingly good fun and more violent than it looks.
- Has echoes of *TimeShift's* look and also its gimmicky shooting.

READ ME

By increasing or decreasing gravity, inject fun, originality and life into a fairly average third-person-shooter shell. With or without a friend. Pow!



● The game is brighter and more beautiful than before with better lighting throughout.

RELEASE DATE: 23 SEPTEMBER

F1 2011

Ready your engines



Straight off the back of the BAFTA award-winning racer *F1 2010*, Codemasters is back to offer another annual helping of everybody's favourite motorsport simulator. Improving upon almost every aspect of its predecessor, *F1 2011* really hammers home its soon-to-be infamous tagline of "Be the driver, live the life, go compete."

'Be the driver' sees the game's handling improved and advanced, allowing the player greater control and precision of their car. However, as a result of this enemy AI is now also a lot more intelligent and difficult – just as you'll be able to tamely come around a corner, so will they and this certainly provided a challenge for us often being overtaken during a wet corner. You asked for it and Codemasters has listened, both KERS and DRS will be present this time so it's probably best you prepare for some slightly more aggressive drivers... we love it.

'Live the life' further expands upon *F1 2010*'s mid-race content with enhanced press coverage allowing the player to read newspaper clippings and online reports on what the media think about

their driving – but hey, do remember, any press is good press, right? Additionally Codemasters has included a wide range of driver animations for both before and after races, allowing you to witness both the highs and lows of an F1 driver's career.

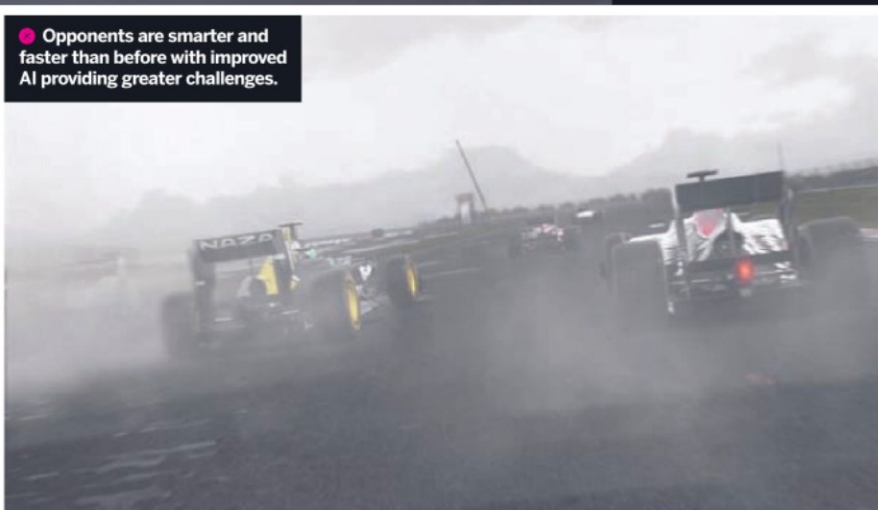
Finally the big feature this year and the core of *F1* itself; 'go compete'. Following on from *DiRT 3*, *F1 2011* features splitscreen multiplayer allowing you to race alongside a friend locally as well as for the first time offering a full online grid of players; consisting of 12 human players and eight AI drivers. There are also multiplayer objectives this time round such as beating previous records for your team, we found this certainly helps to encourage you and keep spirits high (despite finishing in last). And here's the biggie: co-op championships. You can now race alongside a friend and progress through seasons together. Don't be fooled by the name, though, co-operation can sometimes take a back seat when you notice your friend is getting better feedback and superior parts.

F1 2011 is currently in development by F1 fanatics at Codemasters Birmingham. Check out www.formula1-game.com/uk/ for details.



● Handling has been greatly improved to provide greater control around tough corners.

● Opponents are smarter and faster than before with improved AI providing greater challenges.



BEAUTIFUL MOTORSPORT

Everything on and off the track has received a lick of paint. **WE DIDN'T THINK** it possible but Codemasters has managed once again to outdo itself with *F1 2011*'s visuals. Every circuit, car and driver looks absolutely stunning – not to mention the all-new and glamorous paddock area for you to relax amid a hectic season.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Enhanced damage and car failures may mean you regret missing that last pit stop.
- Circuit fidelity has been heightened this year, including the all-new Silverstone track.
- New victory cinematics mean you can celebrate alongside your driver...
- Rather watch the race? There's a spectator mode for multiplayer races this year.

READ ME

F1 2011 waves goodbye to randomised abrupt bursts of rain and welcomes more realistic and atmospheric weather changes; clouds may even appear overhead only to later disappear without any sign of rain – no more lap by lap weather changes!



RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Amy

Formerly 'International Babysitting Sim 2011: Zombie Version'



It's not often you'll see us giving two pages to a PSN release, but *Amy* has shown itself to be such an interesting prospect it would be doing you all a disservice to relegate it to a brief, 100-word boxout somewhere in the bottom corner of a page.

Amy is the creation of Lexis Numérique sister company VectorCell and is the brainchild of one Paul Cuisset. This might not mean much to our younger readers, but this was the man responsible for one of gaming's all-time greats, *Flashback*. Hence, we're excited.

But it's not just the involvement of a French bloke who made a game we like that gets us interested. *Amy* has enough going for it to flare up our cooing glands all by itself. A survival-horror game in the sense that it involves horror and requires you to survive – rather than just *blasting everything that moves* – players take control of one Lana as she works to protect the eight-year-old, autistic Amy of the game's title. Let's have a look at some of the ways it's interesting...

Amy is being developed by VectorCell. Check out www.amy-thegame.com for more details.

STAND BY ME

The two lead characters in *Amy*, the titular eight-year-old and the player-controlled Lana, exist in a symbiotic relationship. The terrified, unspeaking child needs Lana for protection and help to escape, while the elder of the two finds she can survive the fact she is infected when close to Amy. If the bond is broken, they're both going to die – it's pretty heavy stuff, yet it makes us believe it could well have some kind of deeper emotional impact than the usual tripe wants us to have. It might not, too, and in fact we might just laugh when a tiny autistic child gets mauled to death by the victim of a global plague. But that would be our problem, not the game's.

BRICKING IT

Every encounter with an enemy in the game brings with it a fight-or-flight choice. You can stick your route and somehow fight your way through the abominations and other obstacles in your way, or you can just turn tail and leg it. Each choice has its positive and negatives, but the main thing it's going to affect is just how scary the game actually is. It's been a while since we've played under genuine threat – since we've been underpowered and facing off on an uneven playing field. Basically, it's been a while since we were actually made to feel scared by the situation we're in. Hopefully *Amy* can redress that balance and make us all collectively poo ourselves again.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❑ An infected woman and a young autistic girl as lead characters...
- ❑ ...but then, it's not BALD SPACE MARINES for once. Which is nice.
- ❑ ...that probably shouldn't have to be highlighted like this...
- ❑ Obligatory extra 'Flashback was ace' comment.

READ ME

Aside from *Flashback*, Cuisset worked on the sequel *Fade To Black*. You can get that on PSN, if you want a memory freshener (it's not great).



INFECTIOUS BEHAVIOUR

These infected buggers you're facing off against (or running off from) are the result of a series of unfortunate occurrences – global warming, natural disasters, disease, a comet hitting Earth and a virus all contribute to the situation we find our protagonists in. Basically it means there's zombies. These vicious blighters are supposedly rather intelligent, using smell, your heat signature and hearing to track you down and kill the heck out of you. Which isn't a very nice prospect. Aside from a few breakable weapons you have some techniques to overcome enemies, from making them fight each other to, as mentioned elsewhere on these pages, simply running away and hiding. Whatever you do, we won't judge you (we will).

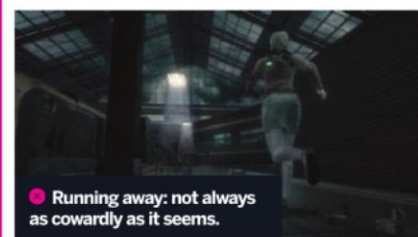


BIG SCREEN



CONCEPTS, FEAR AND RUNNING

No, really – concept art, fear and running away



Running away: not always as cowardly as it seems.



This is international sign language for "aieee!"



Concept art shows this will be quite the ruined township.

IT'S GOT CHARACTER

The mechanics of *Amy* look to be quite interesting, or at least implemented in an interesting way. Amy herself will hesitate if danger is nearby, and holding her hand will give players feedback as to whether enemies are in the vicinity through mimicking the little girl's heartbeat via pad vibration. Similarly, Lana – infected with a virus – will begin to display very

obvious signs of the infection progressing without proper care. These are all pretty basic mechanics when looked at from a purely logical perspective, but the manner in which they are put across to players shows a level of creativity we can't help but admire. Basically, *Amy* looks like it will manage to bring us some very human characters.

PREVIEW



1

FOUR-PLAYER CO-OP

As its title suggests, the latest instalment focuses emphatically on teamwork. Though single play with an AI companion is still an option, *All 4 One* was designed with collaboration in mind, allowing up to four players to join forces. Players can also team up online and drop in and out of gameplay with ease. The last time *Ratchet* fans were able to choose co-op or online multiplayer modes was in the PSP game *Size Matters*, and that was four years ago. Makes sense, then, that this feature has been resurrected for the PS3 generation. Still, it's an update that's long overdue and one we fear may quickly lose its novelty.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One

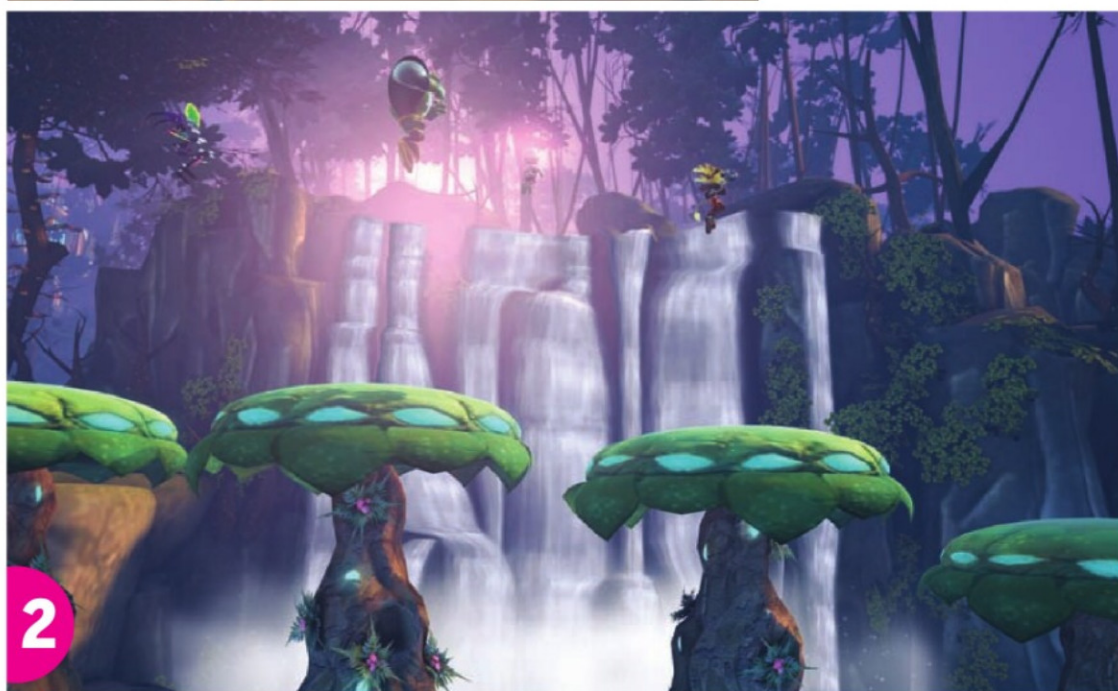
Our favourite Lombax is back... and keeping strange company!

PS3

Two years after the defeat of Dr Nefarious, Ratchet and Clank have packed up their bags to "leave that hero stuff to the other guys." Meanwhile, Galactic President Qwark dismisses concerns about a return from the universe's squishy-hating super villain. "There is no danger," he announces. "Everything is under control!"

But we all know that peace and order do not a *Ratchet* game make. *All 4 One* sees our eponymous heroes thrown head first into yet another adventure, when Nefarious comes back to annihilate his three nemeses once and for all. As usual his plan backfires, and the unlikely quartet are taken to the planet Magnus by an evil machine known as the 'Creature Collector.' Stuck in this unfamiliar world, they have no choice but to work together in order to escape.

Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One is being developed by Insomniac Games. Find out more at www.insomniacgames.com



2

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

One of the most impressive elements of the *Ratchet* games (and indeed the majority of Insomniac titles) has always been their colourful setting. Fortunately *All 4 One* appears to be no exception to this pattern. Judging by the images so far, the environments are rich and varied, ranging from high cliff-tops to futuristic cities, from luscious jungles

to grim seaside boardwalks. However, one crucial aspect remains to be seen: whether there is the same chance to explore as in the previous games, and to the same degree. Judging by the gameplay previews, and acknowledging the limitations of a four-person party, Ratchet's latest adventure runs the risk of being more linear.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

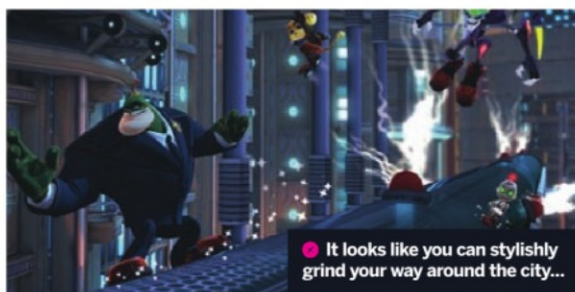
- Finally, a PS3 *Ratchet* game you can play with your mates.
- It's still a true platform-shooter, combining puzzles with action.
- It's retained its signature sense of humour – expect plenty of quotable one-liners.
- You get to play as a diabolically evil robot genius.

READ ME

Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One will be playable on stereoscopic 3DTVs, and is the first ever Insomniac game to be released in 3D!

WELCOME TO LUMINOPOLIS

A sneak-peek at one of the game's key locations



It looks like you can stylishly grind your way around the city...



...or, if you'd prefer, use a more conventional method of transport.

3

THE CHARACTERS

So you may have noticed, the characters look a little different. It's true; the animated cast has a slightly 'goofier' aesthetic this time round, perhaps to fit in with the 'family-friendly' vibe of the co-op feature. They were also subtly redesigned to mesh successfully on a single screen, in order to reinforce that unified feeling. That said, they're fundamentally the same – Ratchet is still furry, Clank is still cute, Nefarious still has a giant cranium and Qark is as comically disproportionate as ever. Furthermore, there's no change in the voice actors behind them, guaranteeing high-quality performances, swiftly delivered jokes and the trademark catchphrases we've all come to love.



4

WEAPONS AND GADGETS

Each game sees advancement on the creative ways in which you can – well, blow stuff up. Thankfully *All 4 One* looks promising on this front, reassuring fans that the *Ratchet* team still hungers for destruction as much as we do. But this time there's a twist: concentrating on the core of the game, weapons are now more powerful when used co-operatively. Meaning blasting an enemy by yourself is fine, but attacking with a friend packs an extra punch. Similarly, you'll need to use teamwork with gizmos such as the swingshot to get from one place to another. Most exciting, though, is the rumoured return of everybody's favourite, the Sheepinator.



OUR PREDICTION

5

At the moment, fans seem to be divided. Some are understandably wary of the game's shift in style, while others are thanking the Insomniac deities for answering their prayers... or something like that. Whatever the case, the appeal of four-player co-op is a tenuous thing. It's a great reason to have a night in with family and friends, but the light-hearted fun could turn sour after pushing a team-mate off a ledge one too many times (be honest, you were thinking it). We'll just have to wait and see. No matter what, it seems that *All 4 One* has kept the ingredients to make it a genuinely enjoyable *Ratchet* classic.



● The Light Eating Z'Grute, released by Nefarious, terrorises Luminopolis – King Kong style.



● The Z'Grute looks like a formidable opponent: just look at those teeth!



● Classic case of "It's behind you."



RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

Ace Combat: Assault Horizon

Call Of Duty of the skies? Sort of. Almost. Maybe. No

PS3

If there's one reason no one gets excited about air combat games, it's because no one bought their PS3 to shoot at a tiny dot in the sky because an anime jet pilot screamed those orders. You can never aim properly either. You overcompensate to the left, then you overcompensate to the right, then you overcompensate to the left, then you give up and fire a missile but, whoops, you only have ten for the whole mission! The entire genre is a chore. Case in point: *H.A.W.X. 2*, which even managed to make its shooting-down-nuclear-missiles finale dull rather than dramatic.

Ace Combat: Assault Horizon has rectified that. It's a game that puts the emphasis on speed and action. It does this via its close-range assault gimmick, which pulls your view towards the tail of the plane you're chasing. From here, you can pepper it with machine gun fire or missiles thanks to the soft lock-on – stay in the vicinity of the plane and you'll keep the close view. Stray too far away and you'll see the enemy swoosh to safety as the action zooms out again. The end result is dogfights feel far

more exciting and intense, as you see oil spew from the machine gun pockmarks left in your enemy's plane.

It's been described by some as *Call Of Duty* in the sky. Which it... isn't. Because it's not. *Call Of Duty* is about soldiers running around on the ground. *Ace Combat* is about planes flying in the air. Fundamental differences, we hope you'll agree. Still, Namco Bandai is hoping to transfer the speed and accessibility of that series to *Ace Combat*'s dogfighting.

That there's even room for set pieces in here – dodging past falling structures in Miami, the mission ending with a parachuting pilot seemingly rammed by another jetfighter – shows how serious Namco Bandai is about reinventing the genre and making it sexy once more. Namco Bandai shouldn't be aiming for this to be *Call Of Duty* of the skies. It should be wanting *Call Of Duty* to be called *Ace Combat* of the ground. We'll see how much of a chance it has come October.

Ace Combat: Assault Horizon is being developed by the team responsible for the previous ones at Namco Bandai. Keep up to date at namcobandai.com.



You have access to this quad-missile, which tracks four targets at once. Multi-death!



You can also get in the seat of a chopper and do a barrel roll. We're not even kidding.



HELICOPTERS?

That's Right, Helicopters

NEW TO THE series are helicopters, with the helicopter mission we played through inspired by *Black Hawk Down*. Jinking around African buildings while picking off RPG-wielding soldiers and SAM turrets, your helicopter has a bizarre loop to throw the scent of nearby missiles off.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Close-range assault is exciting stuff.
- Multiplayer has sleeper hit status written all over it.
- Genuine reinvention of air combat genre.
- You can fly helicopters as well!

READ ME

Effectively a series 'reboot', *Ace Combat: Assault Horizon* is gunning for a grittier story with revamped gameplay to give the genre a kick up the backside.

There are plenty of ways to 'deal' with zombies whether it's death by fire, machete or pistol.



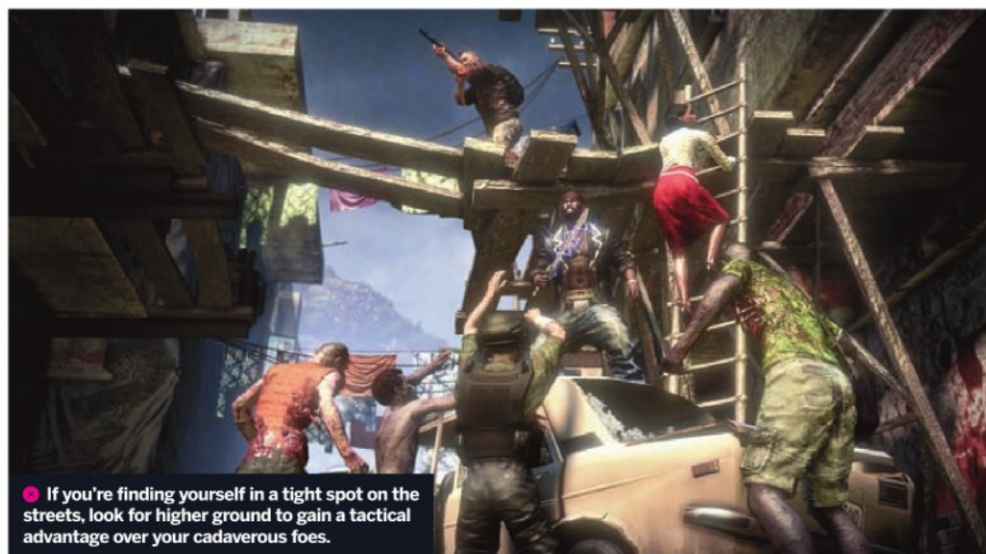
SHOCKING WEAPONRY

Craft your own weapons

THERE ARE VARIOUS weapon-crafting benches around the game which not only allow you to upgrade and repair weapons but also create modifications. We loved the sticky bomb mod, an explosive strapped to your weapon which when thrown at a zombie will explode causing massive amounts of damage to the enemy and all others in its vicinity.



There are plenty of different types of enemy; possibly the most irksome being the ram, knocking you down upon impact.



If you're finding yourself in a tight spot on the streets, look for higher ground to gain a tactical advantage over your cadaverous foes.

RELEASE DATE: 9 SEPTEMBER

Dead Island

Take a holiday in hell

PS3

There's a pretty good chance that you know of *Dead Island* thanks to a certain CGI trailer that showed up just a few months ago – but what you might not know is just what *Dead Island* is.

Simply put; the game is a first-person RPG that takes place on an idyllic tropical island that has been struck by a zombie infection. It's your job to escape the island and help other survivors get out alive, of course, kicking as much zombie ass as possible on the way.

During our hands-on time with *Dead Island* we played co-operatively with three other players, moving through the city area completing one of the game's many side-quests. Our objective was to place as many missing person posters around the city as possible to aid poor Howard in finding his missing family. A fairly insignificant quest that provided us with almost no insight to the story, however, it did get us to grips with the core gameplay.

One of the features RPG fans will be familiar with is crafting; allowing you to repair, upgrade and modify your weapons to maximise PZD (potential zombie damage). Modifying your weapons requires components, though, which are scattered across the island. We often found ourselves rummaging around corpse-littered alleyways

in the hope of locating a much-needed battery to complete a new weapon modification.

Playing co-operatively presented us with new ways to play the game, utilising certain characters' specialties to our advantage, such as Sam B's bulky physique making him ideal as a 'tank' character – additionally, each character has their own skill tree which points can be invested in upon each level up to further improve their abilities in a specific area.

Working together seemed to make combat a great deal more enjoyable, too, with one character knocking enemies down while another throws ranged weapons from afar. The game's combat is predominantly melee focused, with heavy tools such as wrenches and baseball bats splintering the bones of your zombie assailants, however, there are still a range of guns to pick up and fire throughout the island.

Developer Techland told us that the game will take around 25-30 hours to complete with hours and hours of more side-quests and exploration to look forward to afterwards so it looks like there will be a whole load of bang for your buck in *Dead Island* when it releases this autumn.

Dead Island is being developed by Techland. Check out the official website for more details: www.deadisland.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

There's so much more to say about *Dead Island*, we're going to break convention, shatter templates and upset our sub editor by typing loads of words in this section.

Every zombie is fully modelled meaning that each brutal attack is rendered in real-time – prepare for splintered bones and decapitation everywhere you go.

It's not always a sunny paradise, as you progress through the game the weather worsens leaving you to fight in low visibility conditions – great.

Don't get too used to that baseball bat, weapons degrade over time meaning you will either have to repair or replace your arsenal regularly.

READ ME

The transition between single-player and co-op gameplay is seamless, allowing players to drop in and out without interruption, except perhaps the sudden banshee-like squealing of the American 14-year-old who's just joined your game obviously.

PREVIEW



DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO



PUBLISHER: Ubisoft DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Reflections ETA: August

The subject of a barrage of hype followed by absolute radio silence and a delay – those were our last memories of *Driver: San Francisco*. But as we're approaching launch – conflicting reports from Ubi itself stating both August and September as release day – that radio silence has been broken. And what do we see for the delay? Well, a bit more of what we were seeing before anyway. There's been little talk of the mind-hopping mechanic we found so funny-yet-useful all those months ago and an actual, solid showing of the game itself hasn't yet made itself known. What has come out is a bit more telling us why we should give a toss about Tanner and his conflict with Jericho – though it's going to take a bit more than a 'you should care because we say so' to make us care. We're still hopeful for *Driver: San Francisco*, but we can't yet shake the feeling it might not be all that.



SAINTS ROW: THE THIRD



PUBLISHER: THQ DEVELOPER: Volition Inc. ETA: November

It's been a while since *Just Cause 2* and *Saints Row 2* – as such we're having to sit on our hands lest they explode from having no new true dick-about games to fiddle with. Thank Thor, then, for *Saints Row: The Third*. Go to your computer or whatever you use to view YouTube, and enter this link: <http://bit.ly/ikgAkt>, then go and watch it. We'll wait here for about seven minutes or so.

Done? Okay, let's chat about what you just saw. You just saw a man sucking up people in a giant cannon then shooting them at a chimney stack. You saw the same man beating someone to death with a giant purple dildo. You saw that identical chap launching random (hilarious) assaults on passers-by and dropping an *air strike* on a local gang of luchadores. Basically, you just saw one of the best things we've ever seen to hype a game, and it has us impossibly happy about *Saints Row: The Third's* chances.

THE BEST OF THE REST...



RENEGADE OPS



PUBLISHER: Sega

DEVELOPER: Avalanche Studios ETA: August

By simply taking the *Just Cause 2* engine and zooming it out to a top-down view, Avalanche has created a new game for us to download and enjoy. Oh, it has also changed how the entire game plays, too – this isn't just top-down *Just Cause*. A twin-stick shooter, as we like to call them, *Renegade Ops* sees players engaging in 'competitive' co-op – whoever gets the higher score comes out victorious, basically. Drawing influences from the likes of *Jungle Strike* and *Cannon Fodder*, we're open to the prospect of this one being good fun.



DARK SOULS



PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai

DEVELOPER: From Software ETA: October

The wait is getting to the point where it's excruciating, so much so that we're all compulsively replaying *Demon's Souls* just to get our heads back in the right place. Remember: difficulty is a good thing, dying is always your own fault and only a fool walks through an area without their shield raised high. This is getting a bit silly and gushy now, isn't it? Oh well, we're already in love with *Dark Souls*. Get all your winning done during the summer, because come the end of the year you're going to start losing. Hard.



SLY COOPER: THIEVES IN TIME



PUBLISHER: Sony Computer Entertainment

DEVELOPER: Sanzaru Games ETA: 2012

Development has jumped from Sucker Punch into the hands of Sanzaru, which brought the original *Sly* trilogy into HD. We're not sure how good or bad this is, so instead we'll just go on about how good it is to see the return of a series criminally overlooked by so many.

Thieves In Time sees a new mechanic in the shape of costumes, each giving Sly a different power. Yes, this makes us think of *Mario*. Regardless, it looks to add some interesting new mechanics to this time-travelling caper. Though there is the issue of more Nolan North...



DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION

PS3

PUBLISHER: Square Enix **DEVELOPER:** Eidos Montreal **ETA:** August

By the end of August Deus Ex will be out, we will have played it and our opinion on it will be very much forthcoming. We can't force you to wait until our review is out before buying it, but we would recommend that you... oh, who are we kidding? It's clearly going to be a great game, unless it gets overwhelmed by the AI foibles we unearthed during our exclusive playthrough back in **Play 202**. But it clearly won't. Probably.

Anyway, this romp into the world of transhumanism and futuristic sneaking (or shooting, if you want) has half of the world in something of a tizzy since people got hands-on with it. Freedom of choice and a deep, involving world stand hand in hand alongside some absolutely stunning visual design to get us all a bit hot under the collar.



METRO: LAST LIGHT

PS3

PUBLISHER: THQ **DEVELOPER:** 4A Games **ETA:** 2012

We here in PlayStationLand (it *does* exist) never had the chance to play *Metro 2033*. Well, not unless we cheated on the sanctity of our console ownership and played it on PC or (*spit*) 360. Anyway, that's all moot now because we do get to play the sequel. This time around, however, it is not based on the writing of Dmitry Glukhovsky, instead being penned internally at THQ. Will this matter? We don't really know. The setting is already in place and the general themes are unlikely to change much, *and* the first game was quite good, so it could end up being a complete irrelevance not having the original scribe on board. Whatever happens, *Last Light* is sure to be a foreboding and unnerving experience, just like *Metro 2033* was. Not that we'd know, not cheating on PS3 and all...

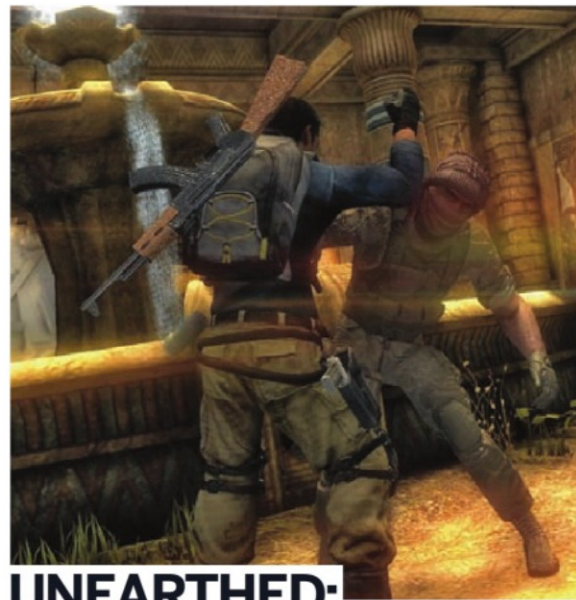


HEDONE

PSN

PUBLISHER: TBC
DEVELOPER: ACONY **ETA:** TBC 2011

You wait... well, not that long, for a free-to-play first-person shooter to come along, then two show up at once. *Hedone* joins *Dust 514* in the category, bringing a free download and a game that you can actually play in its entirety for free. As ACONY told us, it's not in the business of selling content. Transactions won't be geared towards making your highly modifiable character stronger. Instead these transactions will be in place to help those who want quicker access to items. Sounds interesting.



UNEARTHED: TRAIL OF IBN BUTTUTA

PSN

PUBLISHER: TBC
DEVELOPER: Semaphore **ETA:** TBC

A journey through Damascus, Morocco, Alexandria and Dubai, controlling one Faris Jawad and developed by a Saudi Arabian studio? Even though it doesn't look like the most unique or interesting game ever made, count us in. It's not too much of a push to say the whole thing looks ever-so-slightly *Uncharted-y*, but a PSN episodic release – and the sheer novelty of it – could mitigate this factor. Basically we're willing to give it the benefit of the doubt. This could be a very interesting take on action games, as long as it isn't just tripe.



BODYCOUNT

PS3

PUBLISHER: Codemasters
DEVELOPER: Guildford Studio **ETA:** August

Bodycount, an over-the-top FPS from the Codies, has been somewhat under the radar in recent months. Stuart Black, vocal lead of the project, is now gone and we're not sure what there is to look forward to any more. Still, a lack of expectations can be a very good thing. While the images we've seen don't fill us with the most enthusiasm, there's no doubt that there's room for another ridiculous shooter on the market. Po-faced seems to have invaded our games too much – blowing up the world is a thing that needs to make a comeback.

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PLAY MAG Reviews

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Playing bad games so you don't have to

Including: Nothing to fear but *F.E.A.R. 3* itself /// We still don't know what *El Shaddai* means /// Too many flying ants about? Blame *Earth Defense Force*



82 F.E.A.R. 3

There goes the fear

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- 90 Earth Defense Force: Insect Armageddon PS3
- 92 Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 2 PS3
- 92 Cars 2: The Video Game PS3
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on review



84 El Shaddai PS3

Nope, still don't know what it means



88 Transformers: DOTM PS3

Or what 'Dark Of The Moon' means



90 EDF: Insect Armageddon PS3

Bug spray voids this game entirely

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RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

F.E.A.R. 3

Come back, Monolith. We miss you



DETAILS

Publisher
Warner Bros.
Developer
Day 1 Studios
Price
£49.99
Players
1-4
Genre
First-person shooter
Age Rating
18
Website
www.fear3.co.uk
Twitter
@FEAR3Videogame
Facebook
facebook.com/
pages/FEAR-3



F.E.A.R. has always been a game of two parts. The slo-mo bullet-time of the combat plays off against the tense disquiet of the more atmospheric and intimidating sections of horror.

No game in the series managed this as capably as the first. In *F.E.A.R.* combat saw scenery torn up under fire, plaster and debris exploding from walls in slow motion as traces from bullet fire crissed and crossed the environment. But these intense highs would

Day 1 Studios has made the B-movie of horror games. It's meant to be scary. It really isn't

always break and fall back, the echoes of gunfire fading as developer Monolith cranked up the creepiness.

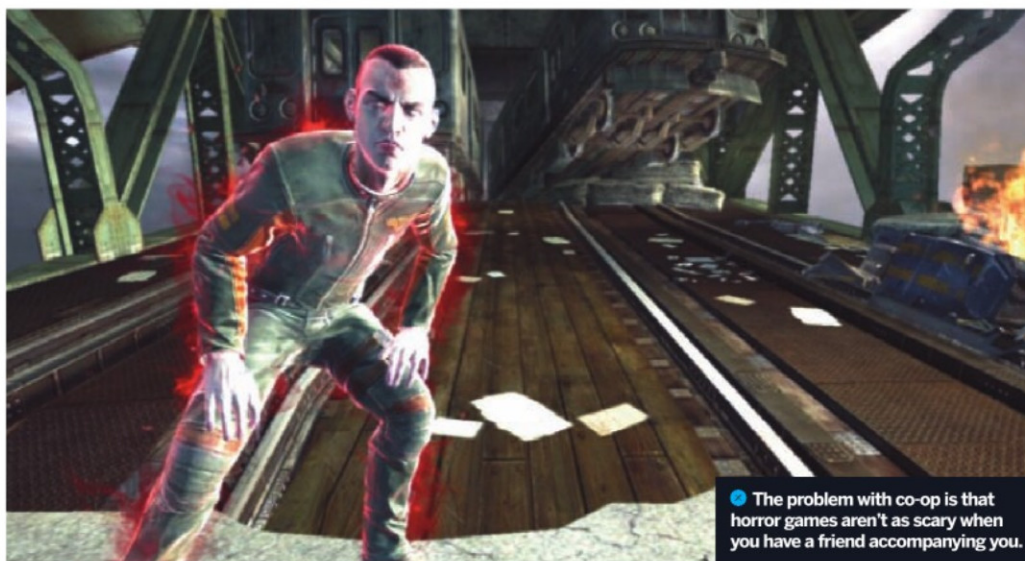
With *F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin* Monolith failed to capitalise on this setup. The eruptions of violence took precedence over the eerie stretches of apprehension, making for a title that felt less like a horror game and more like any other action game with some horror elements sprinkled throughout. *F.E.A.R. 3* feels much the same, except here the horror elements aren't even scary. Developer Day

TAKING FEAR ONLINE

Day 1 Studios proves it's not scared of thinking outside the box

F.E.A.R. 3'S SINGLE-PLAYER may be something of a let down, but Day 1 Studios comes at multiplayer from a far more inventive angle. There are four game modes, the best by far being *Fucking Run*, which sees four players attempt to push forward through Armacham forces while being chased by an encroaching wall of death. *Contractions* plays like *Call Of Duty's* Zombie mode, while *Soul Survivor* is co-op with a twist: one player will be corrupted by Alma and has to secretly split up and exterminate the rest of the team while they battle enemy soldiers. Finally, *Soul King* sees all players start as a Spectre and collect souls – the one with the most at the end claiming victory. For a more in-depth review of *F.E.A.R. 3's* multiplayer, turn to page 96.

Brings a whole new meaning to the term 'explosive diarrhoea.'



The problem with co-op is that horror games aren't as scary when you have a friend accompanying you.

1 Studios has made the B-movie of horror games. It's meant to be scary. It really isn't.

Attempts to scare players are poorly choreographed, the atmosphere and level design is inert and boring and the environments a collection of FPS clichés. The monsters themselves just aren't scary, looking more like angry baboons than demonic creatures.

Occasionally you'll have control wrestled away from yourself for short sequences in which a spindly creature, reminiscent of *Pan's Labyrinth's* Pale Man, will jolt out of nowhere and scream into the players face. But without control, and without any actual danger of dying, there's nothing to be scared of. When Ofelia had to escape from the Pale Man in *Pan's Labyrinth* we felt a mix of terror and excitement because there was a real, impending sense of peril. That's lacking from *F.E.A.R. 3's* scares.

There's another problem, too. During Ofelia's encounter with the Pale Man we felt a sense of fear because we cared for Ofelia and didn't want her to die. We couldn't give two tosses if *F.E.A.R. 3* protagonist Point Man kicked the bucket. He's one of the most generic main characters we've ever seen. He's accompanied by his brother Paxton Fettel, now a spectre of sorts having been shot in the head at the end of the first game. Fettel is your typical vaudeville villain, overacting each of his lines and coming across as more irritating than interesting. Point Man says nothing, staring blankly throughout cut-scenes like he doesn't know what's going on or what he's meant to be doing.

Neither did we, to be honest. The plot is mundane and overly convoluted, with a lot of back story to remember if you hope to follow the narrative. *F.E.A.R.*'s story was never great to begin with, but it's now entered the realms of farce. Day 1 Studios finds far more success with

Televisions! SCARY TELEVISIONS!



F.E.A.R.'s second characteristic – its combat. It's not particularly surprising: making an FPS is far easier than creating a first-person horror.

Environments feel less dynamic than in the previous games, but what is retained is the sense of tactical empowerment – there's a thrill to activating reflex time and taking out two or three enemies in succession.

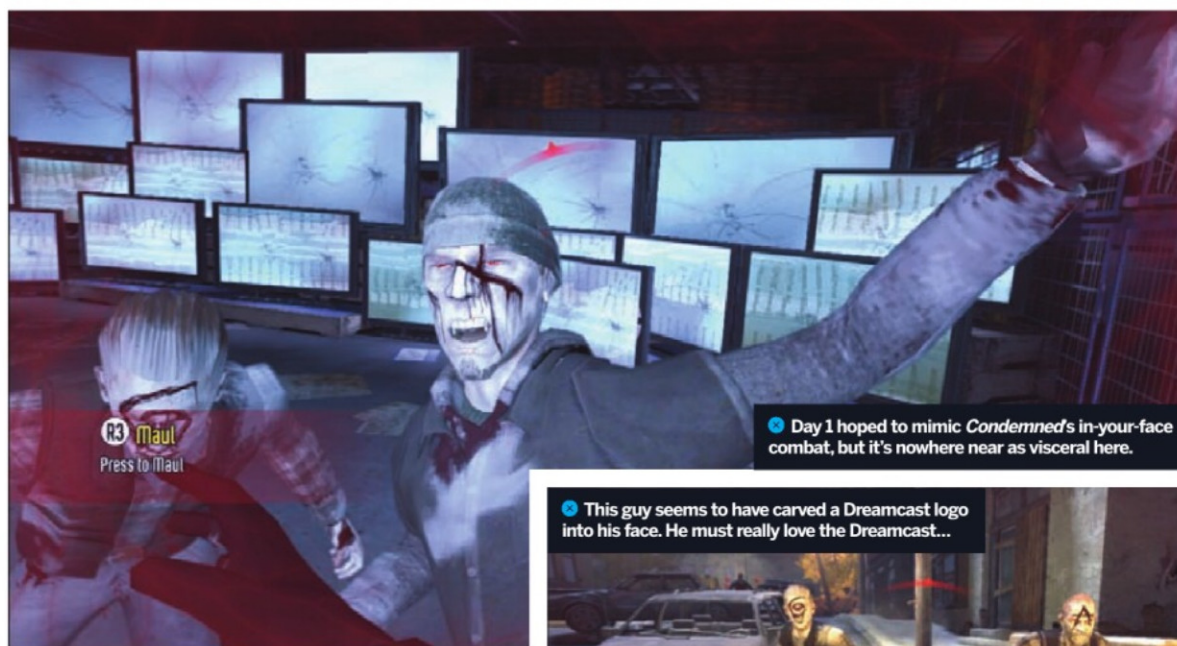
Later in the game you'll encounter the baboon-like enemies we mentioned. They're tedious, scrappy encounters that you're compelled to blast your way through as quickly as possible. The mech sections from *Project Origin* also return, but feel tiresome and unengaging. Still, the combat works. It sticks close to the tried-and-tested template laid down by the first *F.E.A.R.* and as such keeps the game just above the line of mediocrity.

Playing in co-op alters the combat quite significantly, and as you'd expect is the best

In this series



F.E.A.R. Issue 151
None of the entries into the *F.E.A.R.* series have matched the excellence of the 2005 original. **81%**



way to play the game. Paxton Fettel has a range of supernatural powers that can aid Point Man throughout, such as choking enemies and lifting them from behind cover, giving whoever's playing as Point Man a better shot.

Fettel can also inhabit these bodies, at which point you're basically playing as Point Man but wielding the weapon of the foe you possess. This mechanic opens up interesting tactical possibilities and it's definitely the more entertaining way to spend the seven or so hours it takes to complete *F.E.A.R. 3*.

There's a competitive aspect to the co-op, too. Completing challenges will result in points. In the single-player, these points feed into a simple levelling-up mechanic, each level increasing things like the amount of time that can be spent using reflex. It's a strange addition to a horror game, but gives you some incentive to try out playing in different ways.

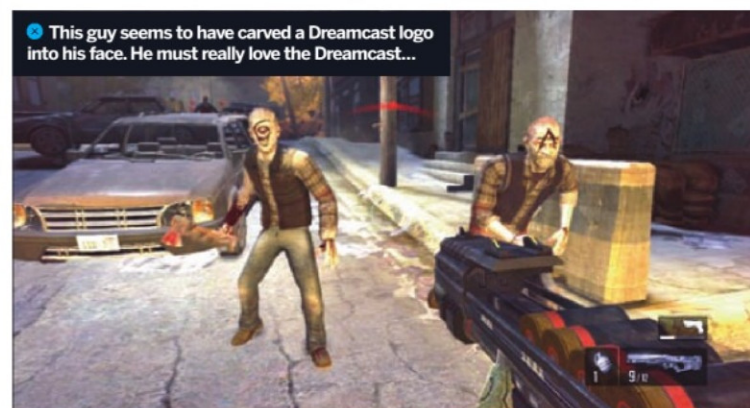
If you ignore the game's failings as a horror; and ignore the fact that its attempts to scare tend to feel comical rather than unnerving; and also ignore the rubbish story, then you'll find a fairly average, but not completely disappointing shooter. *F.E.A.R. 3* may be the least competent game in the series, but even though you won't be screaming in terror it won't have you groaning with ennui either. This time round, that's the biggest compliment we can give.

Chris McMahon

VERDICT

Upon completion of *F.E.A.R. 3* we can only conclude that it might be time to put this series to bed. If not, then Warner Bros. is going to need to look for a more competent developer when it comes to *F.E.A.R.*

60%



Or you could try



Condemned 2 Issue 165
Even though it's three years old, *Condemned 2* is still scarier and packs a bigger punch than *F.E.A.R. 3*. **78%**

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron

TRANSFORMERS ASSEMB-oh wait, Metatron. Sigh. As you were



PS3

For decades videogames have relied on graphical fidelity as a selling point. As technology improved, fans gushing "it looks just like the arcade version" gave way to bolder claims of "it looks real". But a funny thing happened on the path to the future: videogames became preoccupied with realism at the expense of fantasy. Modern consoles can produce a million times more colours than they could in the Eighties, yet major studio releases seem to be

We went into El Shaddai expecting a feast for the eyes and it delivered

increasingly narrow in their colour palettes. People crack jokes about brown-and-grey shooters while E3 presentations offer exactly that, over and over, with no sense of irony.

El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron, however, represents what all games could potentially look like if the Japanese-dominated gaming industry had continued unchecked to this day. It eschews realistic graphics and

backgrounds for the fantastic. Unfortunately, it also clings to old-fashioned design elements that would best be left behind.

Based on a millennia-old text called *The Book Of Enoch*, *El Shaddai* tells the story of Enoch's mission from God to find fallen angels on Earth. After searching for hundreds of years (all in the first chapter) he finds them hiding in a large tower where each floor has been created by the angels themselves. Enoch must fight his way through the tower to confront and purify the fallen angels before God sends a flood to wipe them and all of humanity off the face of the planet.

El Shaddai's most striking feature is, as we mentioned, its amazing aesthetic design. Each floor of the tower is an impossibly large space with its own unique look. From an abstract watercolour world of bright whites, to a blazing red city, to a sci-fi highway bathed in blue, each new chapter of *El Shaddai's* world is as surprising as it is breathtakingly beautiful. Better still, the game uses no heads-up display that might spoil the



DETAILS

Publisher
Ignition Entertainment
Developer
Ignition Entertainment
Price
¥7,980
Players
1
Genre
Action-adventure
Age Rating
12
Website
elshaddaigame.com
Twitter
[@ignitionusa](https://twitter.com/ignitionusa)
Facebook
facebook.com/ignitionentertainment

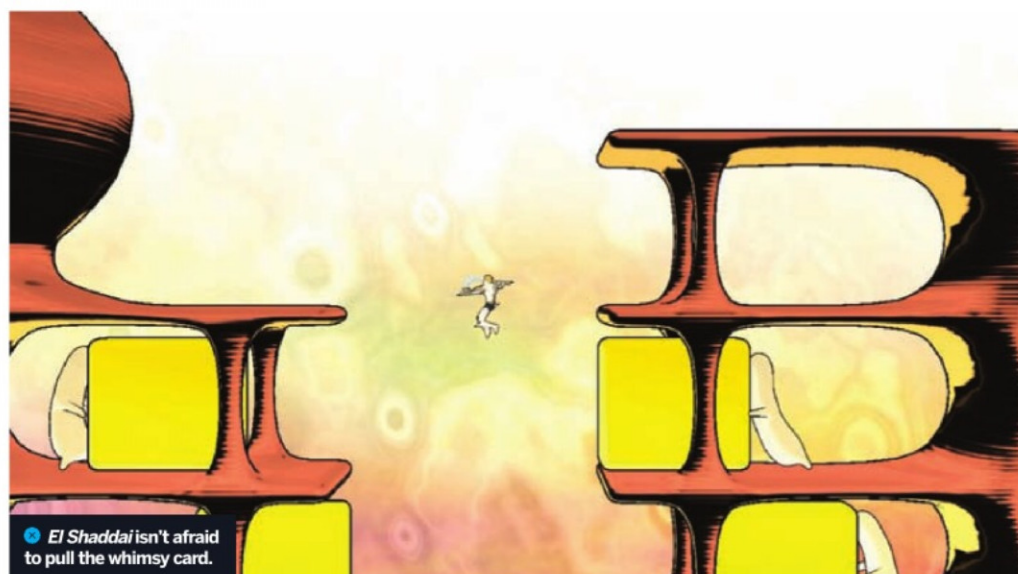
scenery – instead of a life bar, Enoch sheds his armour as he takes damage.

Combat in *El Shaddai* is incredibly simple – so simple, in fact, that there is only one attack button. The strategy lies in timing your blows and in choosing which weapon to use. The three weapons are the bladed Arch, the shield-like Veil and the projectile Gale. Like scissors, paper, stone, these three form a circle of dominance: Arch beats Veil, Veil beats Gale and Gale beats Arch. It's possible to use the 'wrong' weapon in battle and still succeed, but the fight will be much more difficult.

Things get more complicated during *El Shaddai's* frequent boss battles, which aren't reserved solely for the end of chapters. From time to time the fallen angels will suddenly materialise and challenge you. These surprise battles are unusual in that, win or lose, the story proceeds. Indeed, the very first battle cannot be won; it's there to demonstrate the challenges you face ahead, but also teach you that when you are defeated you may mash buttons to revive yourself.

The problem with combat in *El Shaddai*, particularly against bosses, is that it's difficult to tell when you've got it right. The game does a poor job of communicating the aforementioned weapon dominance, something we only knew about from pre-release chatter; the information never appears to be imparted in the actual game. With bosses, there's a subtle colour cue to indicate if you're using the right weapon, but it's not always present.

But regardless of what weapon you use, enemies are hard to read. Far too often we thought we were tearing opponents apart with a long combo only to eat a counterattack followed by an entire sequence of punishing blows. The larger the enemy, the harder it is to understand their body language when under attack – and the more drastic their reprisal. Make one mistake



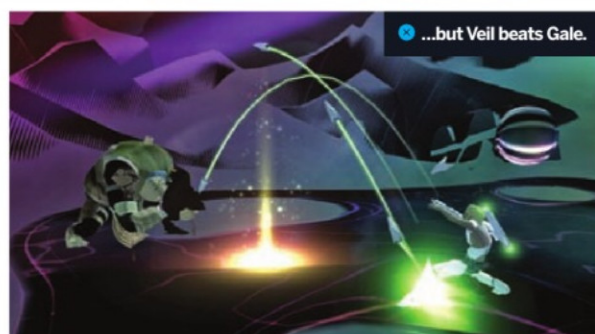
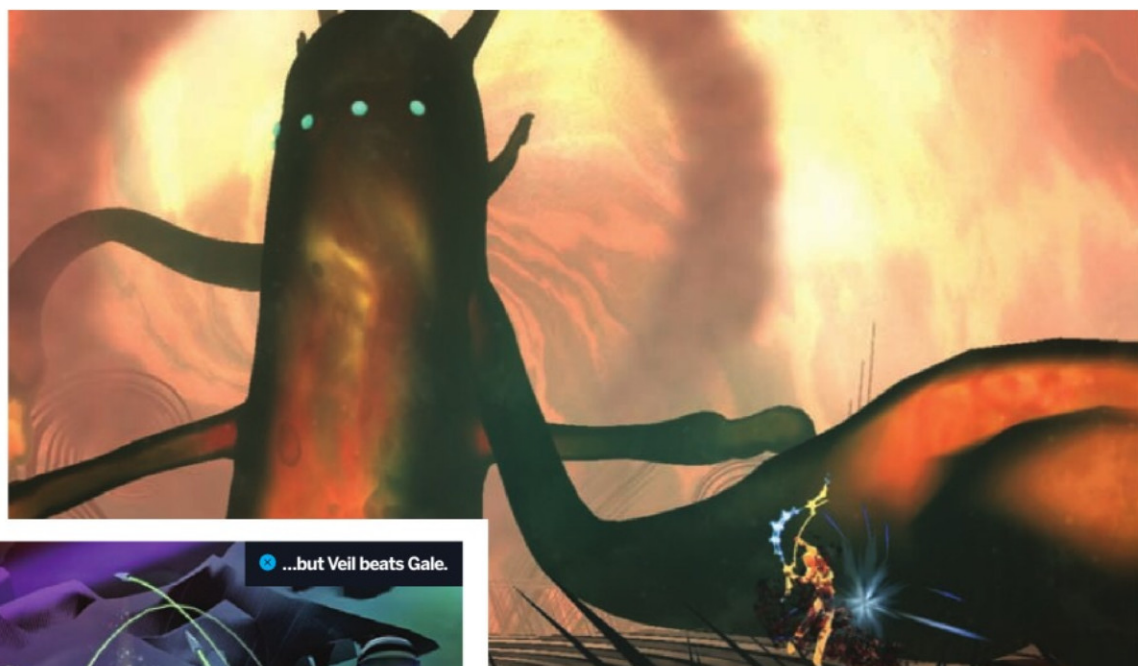
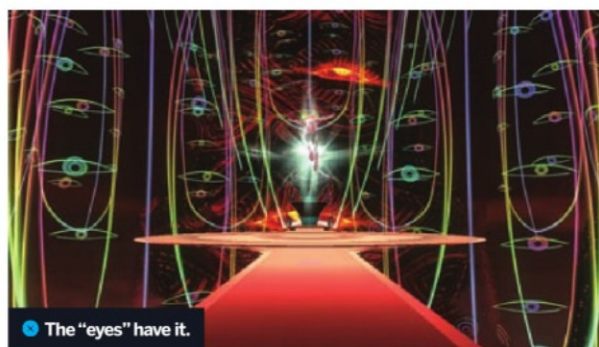
El Shaddai isn't afraid to pull the whimsy card.

Or you could try



Nier Issue 192
We don't know what else to compare this to, so we're going down the eccentric-action-JPG route. **54%**

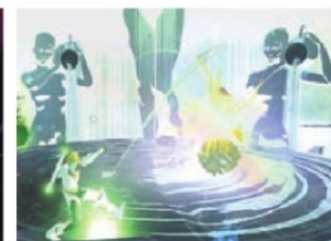
▶ El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron



ALL-STAR CAST

The who's who of El Shaddai

BASED ON A tale written before Christ was born, many of the names in *El Shaddai* will sound familiar to even casual Judeo-Christians. Enoch might not be well-known, but his great-grandson is: Noah (yes, the one with the Ark). God never shows up, but Enoch spends most of the game interacting with Lucifer – aka Lucifer, the angel who would later be cast out of Heaven and become Satan. But fear not, in *El Shaddai* he's arguably the most charming character in the game. In the English version, he'll be voiced by British actor Jason Isaacs.



against a boss and you could easily lose more than half of your armour.

When you're not fighting enemies in *El Shaddai* you're engaged in a different sort of battle against the game's total lack of camera control. This omission makes judging the gap between platforms in the 3D environments needlessly tricky. Sometimes the camera swings on its own as you approach an edge – imagine jumping puzzles in the original *Resident Evil* if you want to get a sense of how awkward this is. The good news is that there's a lenient checkpoint system: the game tends to put you back right where you fell. Still, if you fail too many times you'll have to go back to your last save point.

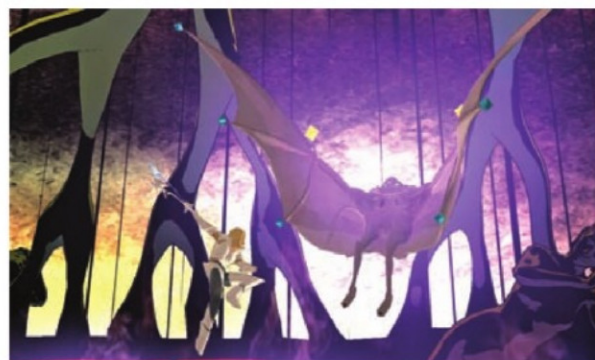
El Shaddai's brilliant visuals go a long way towards making up for such periodic irritations, but it remains a shame the artistic vision isn't matched by the gameplay. As stunning as *El Shaddai* looks, the heart of the game is undeniably repetitive and frustrating. Still, we went in expecting a feast for the eyes, and in this respect *El Shaddai* is nothing less than a royal banquet.

Daniel Feit

VERDICT

Unlike anything else on the market, *El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron*'s extraordinary artistic flair must be seen to be believed. Its beauty is undercut by irritating 3D platforming and frustrating combat, but better to fall short while reaching for the stars.

77%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Captain America: Super Soldier

Another rubbish movie tie... wait, what?

PS3

Yes, that's right. 70 per cent. We know you saw the screenshots of *Captain America* and then eagerly looked at the score, hoping for a review-of-the-game-of-the-movie bloodbath. Maybe you were even hoping we'd do the brilliant 'videogames based on movies are never good' review intro, because there's nothing better than watching a writer slicing up your mind with that classic intro which combines razor-sharp wordplay and dazzling imagination.

But hey, we can't even be boring and derivative with our intros. *Captain America* has broken that convention by being good. How inconvenient! What an annoying thing to do. Instead, we'll just have to tell you about how *Captain America* succeeds where other movie tie-ins have failed by adding some hefty, meaty weight to the combat. It feels slow to begin with but soon, you'll feel the force of metal shield

clunking against human jaw, fist crunching into metal faceguards and explosions sending limp bodies flying.

Experienced gamers will spot that this is an obvious imitation of *Batman: Arkham Asylum* but hell, why not? Better to draw influence from that rather than from that rancid *Thor* game. You can attack in any direction, fling your shield, somersault over enemies and buy new moves. It tries adding a weird multiplier system to the brutality but never bothers explaining it and the countering doesn't flow as well here as it did for the Caped Crusader. Still, it's got enough of the *Batman* DNA that what worked for him works for *Captain America*, too.

The other reason *Captain America* succeeds is it's genuinely terrified of letting your attention wander. Hence the constant backdrop of Trophies unlocking, enemies being thrown at you and the perverse amount of collectables to be found. If there was a record for the amount of collectables in a game, *Captain America* shatters it. It begins with secret dossiers and folders lying about and soon, Captain America is thieving everything in view. Leather gloves! Ceramic egg! Prussian helmet!

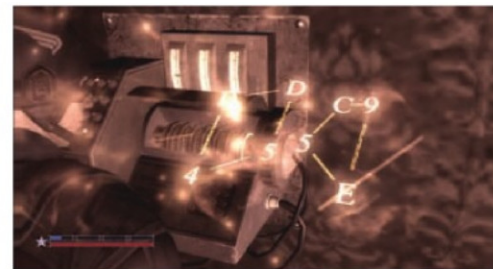
It's not perfect as our 30-per-cent-less-than-perfect score reflects. This is mostly because *Captain America* mistakes endeavour for



Like America, he's not a fan of the diplomatic approach.



Critical Strikes are special moves which get fancy camera angles. SWOOSH.



The platforming sections are pretty weak, which is a shame.

DETAILS

Publisher
Sega
Developer
Next Level
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Action
Age Rating
16
Website
captainamerica
game.com
Twitter
@SEGA
Facebook
facebook.com/sega



excellence, its attempts to fill silence with shiny collectables and more enemies failing to stop the pace dragging when what it really needed to do is mix up its gameplay in more interesting and unusual ways. Even so, this is far better than we dared hope for and bar *X-Men: Origins Wolverine*, it's the best movie tie-in we've seen on PlayStation 3.

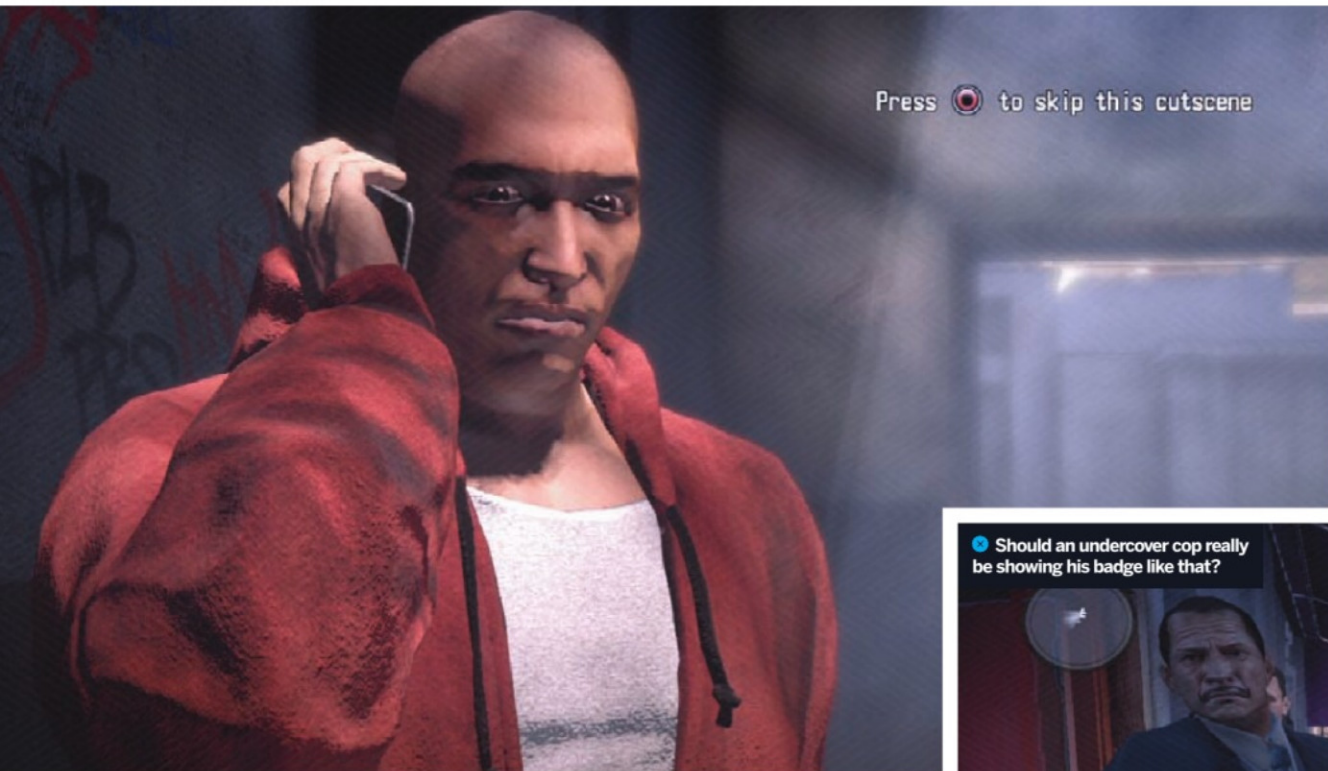
Ryan King

VERDICT

A real surprise, in that we actually wanted to keep playing it rather than being forced to for the sake of the review. It's got a chunky combat system in place and although the pace does sag in places, it's definitely strong enough to validate a gamble.

70%





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Call Of Juarez: The Cartel

F*ck the police indeed



DETAILS

Publisher
Ubisoft
Developer
Techland
Price
£39.99
Players
1-12
Genre
FPS
Age Rating
18
Website
callofjuarez.com
Twitter
@ubisoft
Facebook
http://on.fb.me/h6rLIE

PS3 Firing up *Call Of Juarez: The Cartel* for the first time was simultaneously one of the most depressing – yet tears-of-laughter hilarious – moments in the history of **Play** magazine. Depressing because it's an absolute abomination of a game that should have been strangled the moment some dullard announced that, 'hey, what about a Wild West game set in a new Wild West? SWEEEEET'.
Awesomely funny on the other hand because, gloriously, this turgid mess attracted the attention of our designer, Andy Salter, whose puzzled insights cut to the core of everything that is wrong with *The Cartel*.

"What's this?"
The new *Call Of Juarez*.
"Isn't that the cowboy game?"
Yup.
(Puzzled silence).
"So, are they time-traveling cowboys now?"
Nope.
Long pause as the game world tears at the seams, showing the blue beyond underneath the map.
"This is preview code, right?"

Nope. We're not in the business of allowing our designers to do the reviewing here at **Play**, but Mr Salter's quizzical outbursts will probably speak for everyone that plays this mess. *Call Of Juarez* is simply incredibad, in every conceivable area. Players can select

A shabby FPS with terrible characters, plot and dialogue that Uwe Boll would be ashamed of

from three characters to play as, each of which is a brainless stereotype so we won't go into it, possibly because they're so generic we've actually forgotten them.

Each of the three have different abilities, such as dual-wielding SMGs, having a mullet and so on. This is fine in theory, but any hope that *Call Of Juarez: The Cartel* might become even remotely enjoyable is scuppered by the fact that the shooting is by the numbers and intensely boring.

You've got a bullet time mode, which is next to useless. You can handle two weapons at once, which means you'll have twice the inaccuracy. And, to cap it all off, you spend

most of your time driving or shooting or running around environments that are spectacularly uninspired.

Throw in a ton of bugs – audio dropping, freezing, the game depopulating the world and making it impossible for you to progress – and you've got a shabby FPS with terrible characters, plot and dialogue that Uwe Boll would be ashamed of, and it's a technical shambles

to boot. This was never going to work from the moment Techland made the jump to the present day. Cowboys in the present day? Yawn. Time-travelling cowboys, however: now there's an idea we can get behind.

Steve Burns

VERDICT

Technically horrific, poorly written and outrageously dull, *The Cartel* literally has nothing going for it. Except, that is, maybe the glimmer of hope that it could be used as a manual on how not to make games.

30%





DETAILS

Publisher
Activision
Developer
High Moon Studios
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Action-Shooter
Age Rating
12
Website
transformersgame.com
Twitter
@highmoonstudios
Facebook
facebook.com/transformersgame

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

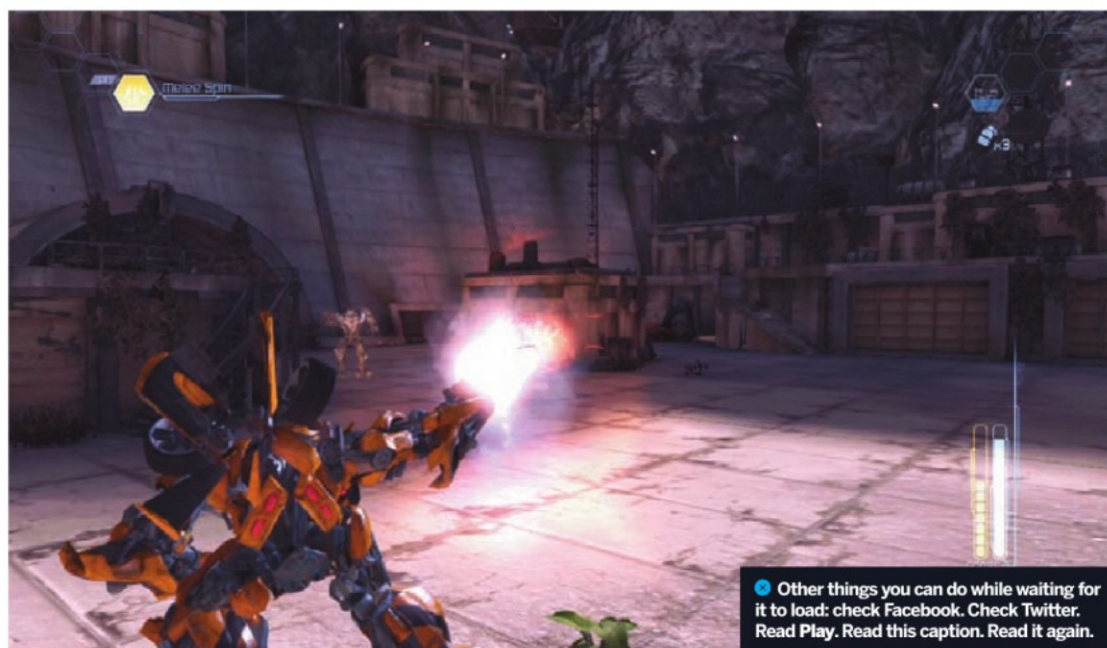
Transformers: Dark Of The Moon

Can a Transformers movie game ever have 'The Touch'?

PS3 A good recipe for an omelette is to crack two eggs into a bowl, add a splash of milk and whisk together, before pouring into a lightly buttered pan. Add chopped onions, peppers and cheese, and serve over two slices of toast, ideally with a pot of coffee for a perfect breakfast.

We tell you this as a public service announcement since *Dark Of The Moon* takes so ridiculously long to install, and you might as well make yourself something healthy to eat

• We don't know what these Transformers are called. Genericons, we reckon.



• Other things you can do while waiting for it to load: check Facebook. Check Twitter. Read Play. Read this caption. Read it again.

while you're waiting. There's also the fairly apt omelette/broken eggs metaphor, where here the particular egg that was broken was *War For Cybertron*. While last year's offering from High Moon near enough perfected the idea of a *Transformers* game, this prelude to Michael Bay's cinema-bound explode-a-thon feels stunted and flawed in comparison.

One of the biggest problems is shifting controls between forms. **L1** locks you onto your target in 'Stealth Force' mode (a hybrid form with vehicular mobility plus added weapons) but robot mode uses **L2**. **L1** in robot mode instead activates each character's unique special ability – a confusing and seemingly pointless shift that will see you tripping up. A lot. Hold down **L2** and you'll shift into full vehicle mode and speed aimlessly forward, changing direction not with the usual left stick but rather the right, which controls the camera in the other two modes. All this only applies to 'bots who turn into road vehicles – jets are a whole other nightmare to control. The only excuse for such conflicted controls is if Activision locked three separate teams in solitary confinement as some sort of sociological game development experiment.

Battle through the joypad equivalent of Twister, though, and the game itself brushes against competency on a few occasions. Playing through each faction's campaign, you'll change characters each mission to exploit their abilities. Starting as Bumblebee, you'll rarely need to leave your Stealth Force mode, while Ironhide plays as a lumbering powerhouse whose robot form is staggeringly more powerful. Mirage is all about speed (and awkward steering), while Soundwave and Laserbeak's missions focus more on stealth and subterfuge.

Some satisfyingly epic boss battles and a story that leads into, rather than slavishly adapts,

• The painful 'why did I agree to do this game' moment of self-contemplation.



the summer blockbuster helps elevate the game somewhat, but the overriding sense is that High Moon wanted to get this out the door and return to (hopefully) a sequel to *War For Cybertron*. It is still the best *Transformers* movie game, though that's not really saying a great deal.

Matt Kamen

VERDICT

A mirror to its cinematic inspiration – all explosions and bombast. Where the movies have ignored things like 'plot', this forgets competent controls and satisfying gameplay. Looks nice, but lacks anything of substance to carry you through the game.

64%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Ape Escape

We saw this game, and now we're not believers



PS3

Ape Escape has something of a history with PlayStation peripherals, being the first game to require a DualShock due to its use of two analogue sticks. It was a gameplay feature that was universally lauded for what was, in 1999, a genuine innovation.

12 years later and *Ape Escape* is using another of Sony's new controllers, the PlayStation Move. However, this time it's not Sony's own innovation but one inspired by Nintendo, and the gameplay too feels like it could have been lifted wholesale

You're guided through levels on-rails shooting the mischievous apes as you go

from one of the Wii's on-rails shooters. The *Ape Escape* series made a name for itself by being unique, original and fun. This motion-controlled entry feels in many ways the opposite.

It's a simple affair – arguably too much so. One part lightgun game, one part monkey-

capture simulator, you're guided through levels on-rails shooting the mischievous apes as you go, occasionally stopping to whip out your net and use the Move to swipe at the monkeys as they run towards you.

The PlayStation Move is incredibly responsive in this respect, moving with near 1:1 accuracy as you twist, turn and angle your net in order to capture incoming chimps. This is where the game is at its best. The remainder of the package is largely uninspired fare that feels

like it was designed solely because Move exists and it needs games, not because there was something

genuinely innovative that it could bring to the *Ape Escape* experience.

There's a distinct lack of gadgets, for one. While the original platformer games delighted in giving the player weird and wacky instruments to assist them in their poaching of monkeys, *Ape Escape* on Move offers just five.

There's your net, a catapult to fire shots at monkeys in the distance or collect bananas, and a harisen that can be used to whack anything in your near proximity or deflect incoming projectiles. There are also two special power-ups that can be activated by collecting batteries – a hoover, and a ray gun that will turn any items it touches into bananas.

• We have to admit, the anime cut-scenes that intersperse the action are rather nice-looking.



DETAILS

Publisher

Sony

Developer

Sony

Price

£24.99

Players

1-2

Genre

On-rails shooter

Age Rating

3

Website

<http://uk.playstation.com/ps3/games/detail/item354898/Ape-Escape/>

Twitter

@PlayStationEU

Facebook

facebook.com/PlayStation

PlayStation



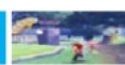
Unlike the games in the main series, none of these features merge together into a solid and entertaining package. Rather, the game feels a disinterested and lazy affair, lacking the humour or playfulness of the originals. More imagination should have gone into making this a clever and innovative use of Move. Instead we've got yet another *Ape Escape* spin-off that feels like little more than shovelware.

Chris McMahon

VERDICT

We remember when the *Ape Escape* series used to feel unique, imaginative and colourful. Now, even with little monkeys dressed in cute outfits and uniforms, it still manages to feel hackneyed and ignorable.

55%





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Earth Defense Force: Insect Armageddon

In which our enthusiasm for chanting "EDF!" wanes

PS3

The familiar cry of "EDF! EDF!" still echoes through the devastated streets of New Detroit. The enemies are still oversized B-movie rejects, relying on sheer weight of numbers and tenacity over any sort of tactics or intelligence. The weapon set is still 95 per cent redundant, five per cent *hilarious*. *Insect Armageddon* definitely is an *Earth Defense Force* game... so why does it feel so wrong?

For the uninitiated among you, a short, obligatory introduction to the series: *Earth Defense Force* was known as *Global Defence Force* over in our fine European nations when it was released back in 2007. You probably didn't play it. Most people in our office didn't play it. We did, though, and it was great. Shoddy as Captain Shoddington the Shoddy, but so delightfully over the top it verged on insane genius – and at a budget price it was allowed some transgressions. Like being hideous and having a frame rate of about one per minute. But it had heart – a real feeling of (silly) love behind it – and it was just a lot of fun. The same can be said of the sequel, *Earth Defense Force 2017*, also released back in 2007. But the main difference between these two versions we've seen on our shores and this latest incarnation is the developer.

Yes, the creative duties have been taken from original Japanese creator Sandlot and

handed to the American hands of Vicious Cycle Software. It's not been a good decision, it turns out. There's a lot to be said for an unassuming and non-self-aware approach to *EDF* games, and this seems to be a point that a change in development team has confused. No longer do we get, "I'm on an exciting underground adventure!" exclaimed by a team-mate just before he dies in the very bowels of a giant ant's nest. Instead we're confronted with (repetitively, thanks to the complete lack of variation in what your team-mates say) things like, "I'm live-blogging this – my hits will be through the roof!" It's self-aware. It's *attempting* to be wacky. It's not a damning indictment of the state of the game as a whole, but it does give you a simple

It's hard to really explain why *Insect Armageddon* loses the magic of the previous games

focal point to serve as an example of just why *Insect Armageddon* doesn't work like we hoped.

But there are reasons that go deeper, and though it's hard to really explain why *Insect Armageddon* loses the magic of the previous *Earth Defense Force* games, we're the sort of magazine to at least try it. Until we get bored and start talking about Brian Blessed, or



DETAILS

Publisher
Namco Bandai
Developer
Vicious Cycle Software
Price
£29.99
Players
1-6
Genre
Third-person shooter
Age Rating
12
Website
www.edfia.com
Twitter
@EarthDefenseForce
Facebook
facebook.com/EarthDefenseForce



something. First stop is the technology backing it all up: it's quite good. That's quite good when compared to the previous games, in that the frame rate generally holds up okay – we saw major slowdown when things became truly hectic, but generally speaking it's far more impressive than what's come before.

It's still dog ugly and shonky, but the comforting bright silliness of the colour palette has been replaced with a world of drab greys. It makes things feel more serious – even though they're clearly not, it's still not the kind of feeling you want attached to a game like this. It's the wrong *kind* of ugly.

Then there's the actual experience of the thing. It's classic *EDF* fare: run around a level shooting thousands of giant ants, spiders, robots, spaceships and whatever else with various (about 300) different weapons. Oh,



Earth Defense Force: Insect Armageddon

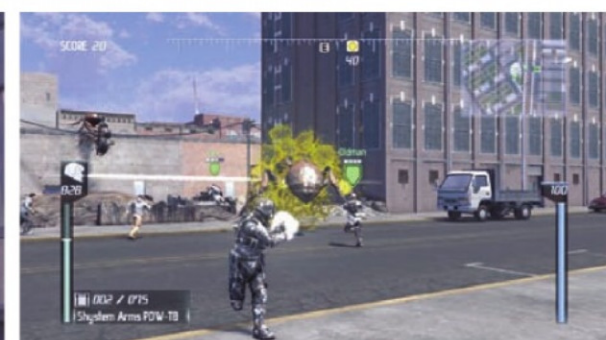


Flying enemies can be an irritant, unsurprisingly.

AND FOR DESSERT...

You can shoot more big things!

BEYOND THE VERY short 15-level campaign mode, *Insect Armageddon* has a fair bit of extra dung ladled on top. It's not the most objectionable of dung and does, as farmers would have you believe, bring some fertility to an otherwise arid landscape. But then, when the overall experience is so mediocre it's questionable whether or not you would actually want to bother playing a remixed campaign, or the relentless survival mode. It's unquestionable that these features add longevity to the game, but it's definitely questionable whether or not this actually matters. Instead of bringing more fun, it brings more 'meh'.



The jetpack is easily the best thing to simply muck about with.

while taking out half the city at the same time, naturally. This is all present and correct, and it's both fun and functional in the short-term. In the long-term, though, is where it all falls apart. *E/GDF* managed to sidestep worries about them being repetitive by being relentless, by mixing up the enemies you faced and the locations you faced them in. *Insect Armageddon* keeps everything in one boring, faceless city. A handful of enemy types – and a few more boss types – pop up on a cycle throughout. The overwhelming nature seems to have taken a back seat, too – on only a couple of occasions, even playing on Inferno difficulty did we really feel like it was getting a bit too much. The combination of these factors, with the additional, rogue issue that it's all very short (discounting replays) makes for a game that just feels dry... hollow.

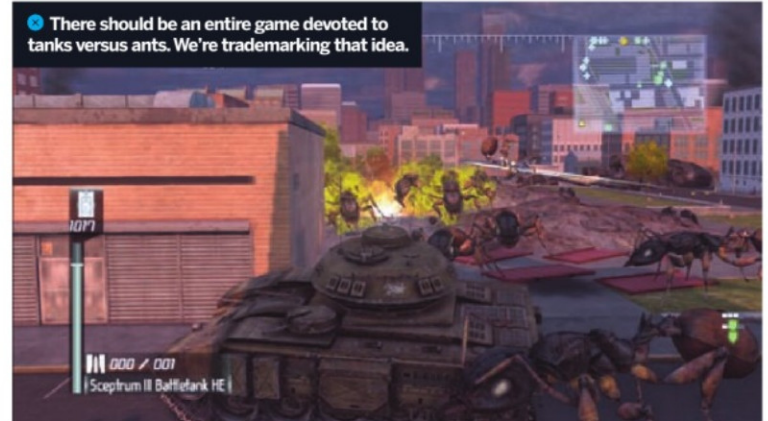
EDF 2017 and *Global Defence Force* before it were akin to puppies: loveable, eager to please but more than capable of shitting all over your living room given half the chance. You'd let them off for being so darn adorable, though. *Insect Armageddon* is that same pooch, a bit older, wearing an ironic hat and horn-rimmed glasses and, even though it's a bit older and wiser, still crapping on your furniture. You'd think it would know better by now – it doesn't, and it's stopped being cute. It's just annoying.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

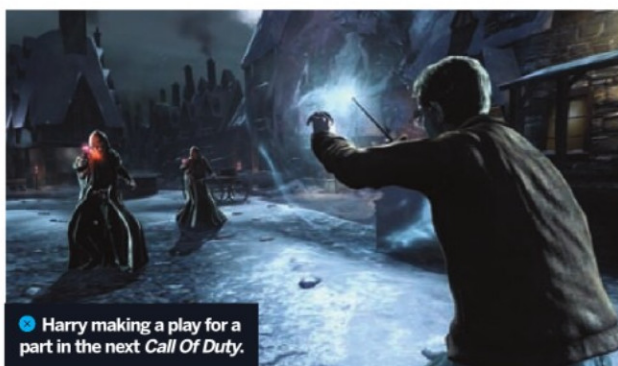
It's fun and it's affordable, but it's short, nowhere near exciting or varied enough, misses the cheap-and-cheerful feel of the previous entries to the series and generally bores where it should entertain. A shame, as we were ready to adore *EDF*.

64%



There should be an entire game devoted to tanks versus ants. We're trademarking that idea.





DETAILS

Publisher
EA
Developer
EA
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Shooter
Age Rating
12
Website
<http://harrypotter.ea.com/>
Twitter
@ea
Facebook
<http://on.fb.me/q4aOy9>

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 2

Right up there with Uncharted! (Not really)



Laughter. Howls of disbelief. The desperate need to tell other people. Look! It's Harry Potter! And he takes cover. And he can blindfire. And he has a bizarre chaingun wand that shoots fireballs like a family-friendly mini-gun. God. What am I playing?

There are no answers in *Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 2*, only questions, followed by more questions, followed by yet more questions. Why is this a cover shooter? Why are there sniper spells? Why ignore our review of *Deathly Hallows: Part 1* which mentioned all the same problems? Should the developers

subscribe to *Play*? Why am I playing as a horse in a Harry Potter costume? The awful animation, the jarring gameplay, the dull levels... it's not good.

Deathly Hallows: Part 2 is not the worst game you'll ever play, but that's only because *Rogue Warrior* exists. Fans might find the whole experience inoffensive enough that they can close their eyes and numb their gaming soul to suffer level after level of generic cover shooter (cover shooter! Really!) with chunks of plot being dripped to them. But hopefully you're normal. Hopefully you don't make pizza in a spiky shape. You don't buy fish to guard your home. You don't buy crash

helmets because they look good. Most of all, you definitely don't buy a *Harry Potter* game because you fancy playing a subpar cover shooter.

Ryan King

VERDICT

That *Deathly Hallows: Part 2* is bland and poorly executed remains no surprise. That it continues to be a cover shooter and has happily trotted out to another critical mauling is a surprise on every level.

37%



DETAILS

Publisher
Disney Interactive Studios
Developer
Avalanche Software
Price
£39.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Racing
Age Rating
7
Website
Disney.com/CarsVideogame
Twitter
@DisneyPixar
Facebook
<http://on.fb.me/9dJZ4z>

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Cars 2

Actually not that bad...



Quick warm-up question: were you a fan of Black Rock Studio's explosive racer *Split/Second*? Of course you were, because it was brilliant. Were you then disappointed when Black Rock was closed down and a great game was doomed to never receive a sequel?

Of course you were. Strange then, that the closest you might get to playing that sequel seems to have come from the unlikelyst of sources. *Cars 2* shares a lot of DNA with *Split/Second*: there's a level that sees you haring around an airport, trying to avoid a descending plane crushing you with its landing gear. There's a focus on decimating your enemies, especially

in the levels that feature trucks with explosive red barrels as cargo.

Even the beautiful, below-the-car HUD is the same. It's enough to make us all misty eyed, but sadly, despite appearances, *Cars 2* isn't *Split/Second*.

On the other hand, it is a genuinely playable movie tie-in that will distract adults for more time than it really should, and probably keep any demented offspring they may have quiet for two to three days. While the racing itself isn't anything mind-blowing, the constant unlocking of cars, tracks and modes in the campaign gives the game a nice rhythm. As does the constant rotation of game types: standard racing,



arena-based combat and time-attack modes all feature and are cleverly used.

Like most racing games, however, multiplayer is where *Cars 2* really shines. The modes and tracks are nicely set up for blasting your friends into oblivion, and it nicely doubles as a good game parents can play with their kids. Awww.

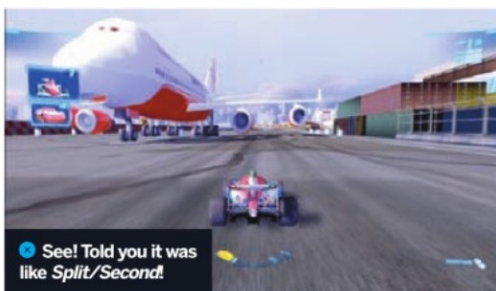
High praise then, but despite this *Cars 2*'s greatest achievement is perhaps being a movie licence that doesn't totally suck. Looking for a *Mario Kart*-style racing fix? Look no further.

Steve Burns

VERDICT

Don't let the licence fool you: this is actually an enjoyable racing game that will appeal to all. And, more importantly, it's a little bit like *Split/Second*, which means it gets an automatic 100%. Then loses 32%. Easy come easy go, eh?

68%



See! Told you it was like *Split/Second*!

Green Lantern is set some time during the film or just after it – it's never really explained.



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Green Lantern: Rise Of The Manhunters

In brightest day, in blackest night, Green Lantern the game is actually alright



Publisher Warner Bros. Developer Double Helix Games Price £34.99 Players 1-2 Genre Action-adventure Age Rating 12 Website www.greenlanternvideogame.com Twitter @DoubleHelixGame Facebook <http://on.fb.me/imxQ6q>

Back in issue 179 we found ourselves doing something that we aren't very accustomed to. We awarded a movie tie-in game – *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* – a half-decent score.

It's only once in a blue moon that a game piggybacking on the popularity of a film achieves such a feat, and yet here we are again. *Green Lantern* isn't quite as enjoyable as *Wolverine*'s last

miniguns, baseball bats, maces and rocket launchers (why Hal Jordan never just imagines a T-Rex and sets it on his enemies we will never know).

It's fast, fluid and powerful combat, with swords morphing into hammers and bombs as you whip the combo multiplier into a frenzy. It could hardly be called a 'deep' combat experience, and after a few hours the repetitiveness does become a problem – *Green*

Lantern's greatest failing is that it relies far too much on fisticuffs and rarely dares to mix things up a little. But it is fun, especially with a friend playing co-op, and that alone is a lot more than most movie tie-ins seem willing to offer.

movie tie-ins seem willing to offer.

Chris McMahon

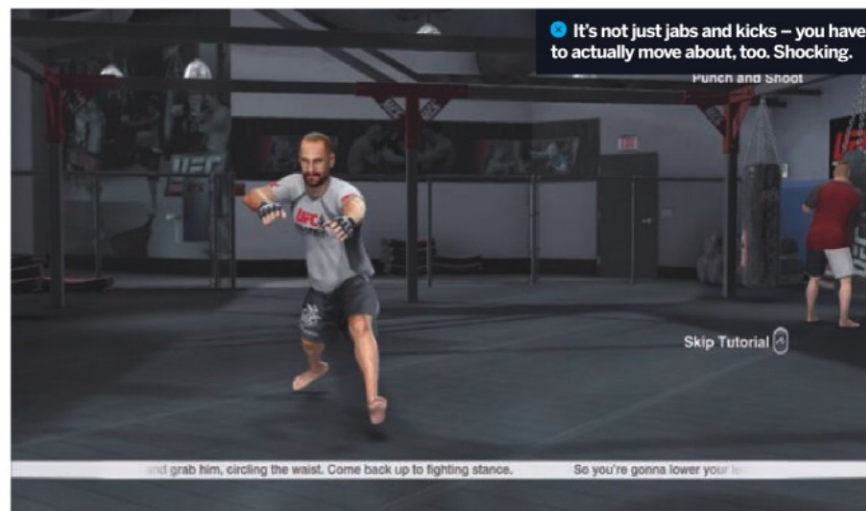
VERDICT

We weren't expecting it, but at some point during our review of *Rise Of The Manhunters* we discovered we were actually having fun. That's quite the feat for a game likely made on a budget and under strict deadlines.

61%



It's not just jabs and kicks – you have to actually move about, too. Shocking.



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

UFC Personal Trainer



Losing weight through man-punching



Publisher THQ Developer Heavy Iron Studios Price £44.99 Players 1-2 Genre Fitness Age Rating 3 Website www.ufcpersonaltrainer.com Twitter @UFCPT Facebook facebook.com/UFCPersonalTrainer

Arriving too late to be inducted into the Fitness Quest, *UFC Personal Trainer* is indeed another game focused entirely on making the person using it get less fat. Tying in the whole UFC fighting thing is sure to draw in different faces to the usual fitness fare, and while if they use it properly they will indeed lose weight – and figure out how to throw a punch better – there are some issues with *Personal Trainer*.

The system uses Move as its feedback method – your movements are registered using the wagglegstick, basically. While Move is 1:1 on the accuracy scale, that's for pointing and waving. Not for whole body exercises. *Personal Trainer* is fairly inaccurate with its recognising your actions on screen, with phantom punches registering as much as real punches don't. It's an irritation that's overcome in two ways: by having a bespoke system, like the better *EA Sports Active 2* does, or by using... sigh... Kinect.

It's another game focused entirely on making the person using it get less fat

It's sad to have to say, but *Personal Trainer* comes across as if it was developed with the 360 add-on in mind. It's functional with Move, but on Microsoft's console it's quite impressive.

Still, if you put in the effort you will be rewarded – overlook niggling faults and a calorie counter that has to estimate what you've burned and *UFC Personal Trainer* is a decent fitness program.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

It works, but you have to overlook the fact it's clearly a lot, lot better with Xbox 360's Kinect than it is with Move. A bespoke system, like that of *EA Sports Active 2*, is a far more preferable option.

65%



DETAILS

Publisher
Namco Bandai
Developer
Tecmo Koei
Price
£49.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Action-adventure
Age Rating
12
Website
dynastywarriors
gundam.co.uk
Twitter
@tecmokoeiurope
Facebook
facebook.com/
tecmoeurope



• This pretty much sums it alllllll up.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3

It's not that bad, honest!



By now you've probably made your mind up about the *Dynasty Warriors* series and its many, many offshoots. Either you love routing thousands of identikit soldiers on faceless battlefields, mashing **△** until your brain dries out and your thumbs attempt to sue, or you hate it. It's that simple, and *Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3* isn't going to change your mind on that matter.

Still, it is at least more entertaining than say, *Warriors Of Troy*, if only because the over-the-top anime art style is vibrantly drawn and the

Gundam series as a whole lends itself to these sorts of excessive shenanigans. Oh, and also, laser swords.

Aside from the lingering fear that you might be wasting your life by playing it, there are plentiful customisation options as well, if that's your thing. Really, however, the question is this: do you enjoy the thought of committing acts of wanton violence while a feminine young man shouts inspirational/nonsensical speeches at you? If so, you're in luck. If not, then pressing **△** starts to get *real* dull real quick.

Steve Burns



• Everything here exists only to die. BWAHAHAHAHAH.



VERDICT

With the *Gundam* licence, it's just you hitting things a lot: no more, no less. The core gameplay is merely basic, but why doesn't Tecmo Koei take some chances with the *DW* offshoots? We're not saying that they should branch into bloody '*Dynasty Warriors: Gardening*' or something, but throw us a bone here

56%



DETAILS

Publisher
bitComposer Games
Developer
Games Farm
Price
£34.99
Players
1-8
Genre
Flight sim
Age Rating
12
Website
www.airconflicts.net
Twitter
N/A
Facebook
de-de.facebook.com/
pages/bitComposer-
Games/122725088491

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Air Conflicts: Secret Wars

Umm...the Second World War wasn't a secret...



There's nothing better than dogfighting in videogames. That may be an exaggeration, but there are few things in the world that manage to be as consistently fun as the act of jinking about in the skies, trying to outmanoeuvre that one enemy you have decided will be *the one*. He

will go down, be it in flames or simply from catastrophic bullet-holing to his air-mobile's canopy. Whatever happens, this balletic battle of the skies – the ultimate stage show – will be settled with the most final of curtain calls.

It is still a battle. It is still part of a war. People do die, and that is never pretty. But there is a



• Nazis in the rear-view mirror, eh?

true sense of honour in the one-on-one conflict of the skies. The spiritual successor to jousting, and that which itself has been supplanted by the unheroic art of simply pressing a button from a few miles away. It's almost romantic, in a way, how dogfighting can raise such feelings of pride and such a swell of joy when it goes your way. When your foe is vanquished. But you will remember them, for they took part in something *honourable*.

Which is nice and all, but *Air Conflicts* is a bit pump. When you see it in the bargain bin for a fiver in a couple of months' time it's worth a couple of hours mucking about on it, though. Right now? Nah.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Sorry, we got a little bit carried away up there. *Air Conflicts* is a decidedly average experience. It works, it can be satisfying (hello, dogfighting!) but it really doesn't do anything, at all, that would make you actually really want to play this.

58%



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PUBLISHING





F.E.A.R. 3



DETAILS

Publisher
Warner Bros.
Interactive
Entertainment
Developer
Day 1 Studios
Release Date
Out now
Price
£49.99
Players
4
Genre
FPS
Website
www.fear3.co.uk
Twitter
[@FEAR3Videogame](https://twitter.com/FEAR3Videogame)
Facebook
facebook.com/pages/FEAR-3

Containing the best new MP mode in some time. Surprising, no?

WHENEVER A STORY-DRIVEN FPS drops onto our mat boasting some noise about 'innovative' or 'groundbreaking' multiplayer features, we try our hardest not to sigh wistfully and forget about it. Of course it'll be different, Mr PR. Yes, Mr Developer, we're sure that you're putting an Interesting Twist On Proceedings. No, dear reader, we haven't forgotten being told all these things countless times (*Condemned 2*, you bastard) and them not being true, and we're sure you haven't either.

So it's some surprise that, hey, *F.E.A.R. 3*'s multiplayer modes in general are actually pretty good and one in particular is brilliant. It's not likely to remove that copy of *Call Of Duty* that you've got soldered into your PS3, but what is? (The next *Call Of Duty* – Ed.)

Boasting five very different game modes, Day 1 Studios looks to have done something a bit strange and actually thought about them, rather than getting the tea boy to knock 'em up posthaste and call it a day. (We should make it clear that we appreciate that some developers do actually work extremely hard on this type of thing. Some of them even get the work experience boys to knock 'em up.)

First up is Contraction, which is essentially *Black Ops*' Zombie mode, right down to the

repairing of barricades. Tasked with holding off wave after wave of increasingly tougher enemies, it's the same game you've been playing since *Space Invaders*, albeit with a couple of neat twists.

F.E.A.R. 3's multiplayer modes in general are actually pretty good and one is brilliant

The first is that to re-arm you'll have to head out into open spaces to pick up weapon crates. Bringing them back to base lets you get kitted out again, but adds a bit of tension when the going gets tough. The second is that Alma will be randomly wandering around the map: look at her directly and you're in big trouble, like looking at the sun or a woman's breasts (© Seinfeld).

Soul King uses the same interesting possession mechanic as the main game, tasking players with taking over the bodies and harvesting the souls of AI soldiers in a bid to score more points than your rivals. It's genuine fun; trying to balance out the need to rack up the points against the risk of losing a whole lot more should one of your foes take you out in the process. It's a nice change of pace from simply shooting people's brains all over the furniture.

Next up are two modes that come only with new copies of the game or via a Project Ten Dollar-style DLC code. Soul Survivor splits players into two factions: one intent on possessing the F.E.A.R. team, with the other

being said squads attempting to reach an extraction point. It's a welcome

distraction, but is nowhere near the quality of the final mode, F*cking Run.

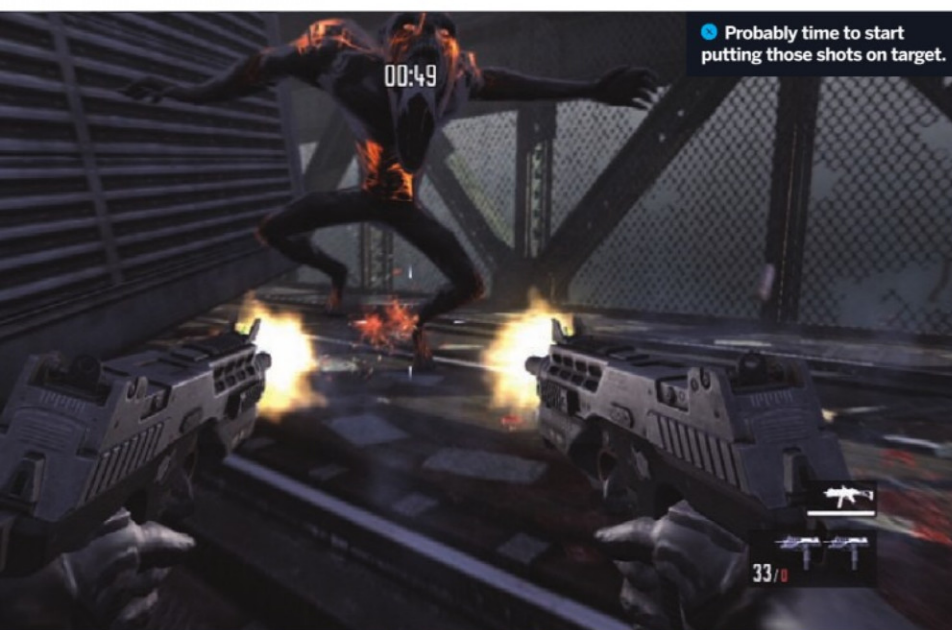
Yes, it's actually called that, and the content of the mode is just as excellent as the *Daily Mail*-baiting name. It's a simple setup: you and up to three other players simply

TEAM FOCUS WOO!

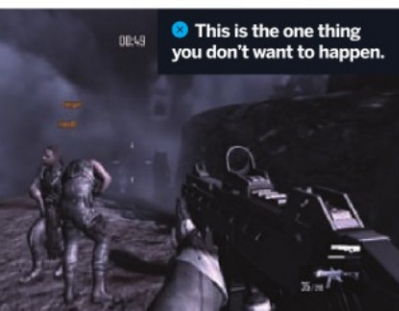
Actual thought going into MP? What's going on?

AS WE MENTIONED in the review, we can't thank Day 1 Studios enough for deciding to tailor its multiplayer modes around the game's strengths rather than just rehashing *Call Of Duty*. F*cking Run in particular is incredible, but it's the small team sizes that really make things tick. There's none of the overblown eight to 12 player teams here: instead there's a real focus on tactics and playing to the strengths of your team-mates, rather than charging around with fire jammed down. Other developers, take note.

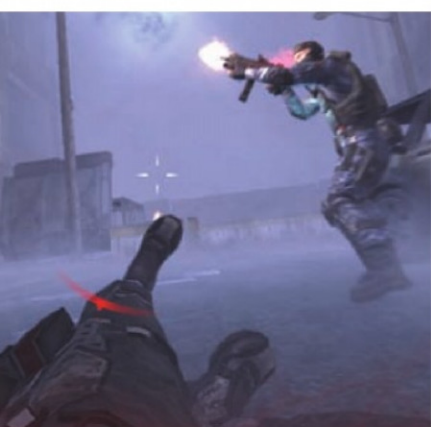
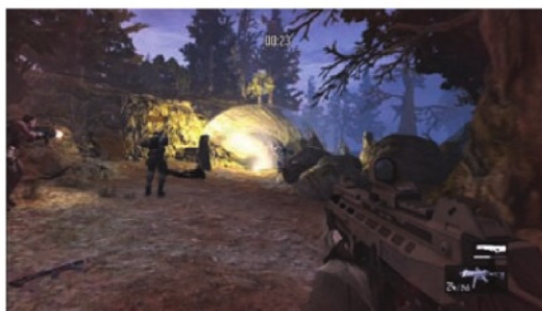




Probably time to start putting those shots on target.



This is the one thing you don't want to happen.



have to make it from one end of the stage to another without a) falling victim to the horde of enemies in your path, and b) getting consumed by the wall of smoke-death that chases you all the way. If one player gets consumed, that's it, so you'll all have to work as a team out there.

This simplicity is its genius. Early stages are a breeze as you dart towards the safe room, but later the game ups the ante by throwing in tougher foes and twisting routes that always leave you unsure and panicked as to where you should be headed. As the wall gets closer, the screen starts to grey out and the soundtrack replicates a fastened heartbeat, it's genuinely difficult not to let out a startled 'AHHHH!' And yes, you will say 'f*cking run!' at some point.

We'd recommend picking it up if you bought the game second-hand, as it's certainly the best part of a multiplayer package that acquits itself very well indeed.

Steve Burns

VERDICT

Refreshingly different and quite innovative to boot, *F.E.A.R. 3*'s online suite is a welcome distraction from the glut of run-'n'-gun *Call Of Duty* wannabes that litter the shop shelves. Just remember, though: the best part of the game is only available to new owners or those willing to shell out for a DLC code. ★★★★★



Transformers' multiplayer is as uninspiring as the game's single-player mode.

Transformers: Dark Of The Moon

Transformers, COD in disguise

Publisher Activision Developer High Moon Studios Release date Out now Price £49.99 Players 2-10 Genre Shooter

MORE ENJOYABLE THAN the main game by some considerable distance, *Dark Of The Moon*'s multiplayer still isn't *that* good. It's a rather dull *Call Of Duty*-lite experience, complete with levelling up and customising your character. There are only three modes, two of which boil down to 'kill something right bloody now' and another based around node capturing.

Which is all well and good we suppose: after all, even the most average online player has probably committed more war crimes than the International Criminal Court would know what to do with. Shame then that there's no fun in any of the actual shooting: the only viable class is the

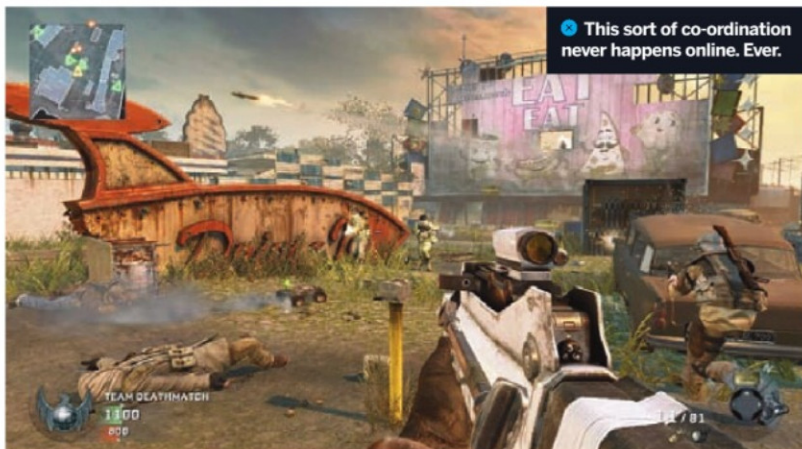
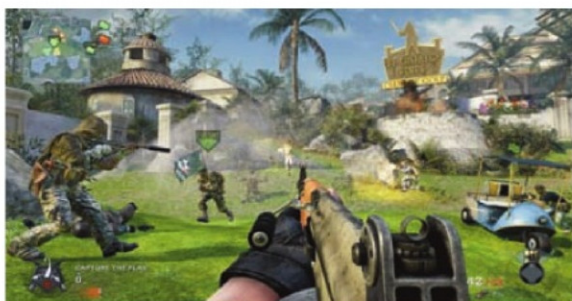
Scout due to its small size, all weapons feel like they have the force of a weak gust of piss, and besides it's simply more fun to drive around in your car form, kiting enemies into other people's paths than actually kill anything yourself. You've already got *Call Of Duty*: play that instead.

Steve Burns

VERDICT

There's very little reason to play this above and beyond using it as evidence for the argument that not all games have to have multiplayer modes. You do know that, don't you developers? Don't you? Oh, you don't? Well listen up, yeah? ★★☆☆☆





DETAILS

Publisher
Activision
Developer
Raven Software
Release Date
Out now
Price
£9.99
Players
1-16
Genre
FPS
Website
www.callofduty.com
Twitter
@JD_2020
Facebook
http://on.fb.me/pWqGYA

Call Of Duty: Black Ops Annihilation Map Pack

Black Ops, you've done it again (cue Happy Days theme)

FORGET THE SNEERING cynics who think that the sheer frequency of these map packs is a little too much: they're right, of course, but when the maps are as good as these then we'll just have to live with the extra strain on our wallets.

Again boasting four new (well, kinda, but we'll get to that in a minute) maps and a new Zombie mode for your hard-earned cash, *Annihilation* follows in the footsteps of the *Escalation* pack by providing another round of fantastic MP maps for you to run around like headless chickens in.

Drive-In is our personal favourite. Hacking it around a broken down – yes – drive in, it's a map that suits both deathmatch and objective play, with plenty of opportunities for close-quarters combat (pro tip lock: down the fast food restaurant and rule) and mid-range sniping from both the projection room and the screen itself.

Next up is Hangar 18, a mid-sized map that has a Blackbird aircraft plonked right down in the middle of it. Which is nice, especially when

people insist on climbing all over it, giving you more easy kills than Arnie in *Commando* and *Predator* combined.

Those two are the best out of the four, but the other two aren't exactly rubbish. It's just that, well, we've played them before: Silo is an almost perfect retread of *Modern Warfare 2*'s Quarry, and the golf course-set Hazard is an intentional rip of Treyarch's earlier *World At War* level Cliffside. Which, of course is no bad thing: Cliffside was ace, and so is Hazard, but we're more inclined to lean towards the newer maps. Throw in a new Zombies location, though, and you're laughing either way.

Steve Burns

VERDICT

Another cracking addition to the already great Black Ops map rotation, *Annihilation*'s maps are sure to become very popular due to their flexibility. Better than *First Strike* by a mile and probably on a par with *Escalation*, get this in now.

86%

DETAILS

Publisher
Wizards of the Coast
Developer
Stainless Games
Release Date
Out now
Price
£7.19
Players
1-2
Genre
Strategy
Website
www.wizards.com/Magic/Digital/DuelsOfThePlaneswalkers.aspx
Twitter
@wizardsmtg
Facebook
on.fb.me/iHGbeV

Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers 2012

Wait! Come back! It's good!

GIVEN THAT IT'LL usually see you plummeting down the social status charts faster than those guys that wear tags and have to go door-to-door every time they move, admitting you play *Magic: The Gathering* is a brave move. And let's face it, that's because it's a load of geeky noise for people who can't get real friends, isn't it? A load of boring fantasy gubbins with all of the excitement of watching a *BBC Breakfast* interview with Sting, yeah?

At least, that's what we thought before we started playing *Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers 2012*, but we soon discovered ourselves actually enjoying it because it's really rather good. We even surprise ourselves sometimes.

Drawing cards from a deck to defeat your opponent might not sound that thrilling, but get past the heavy fantasy tropes and you'll discover a game of skill and strategy. The basic act of balancing your resources against your offensive abilities is always engaging, and when you get to the higher levels of magic and

other boosters the desire to crush your opponent is just the same as in any shooter out there. Presentation goes a long way to drawing you in.

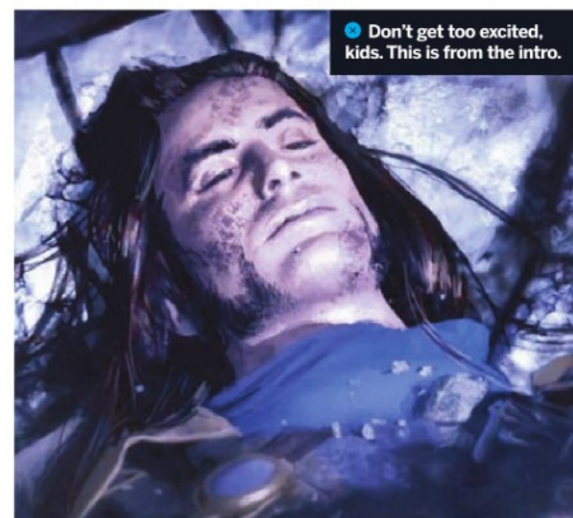
We recommend you check it out, even if you're not exactly into this kind of thing. It would have scored higher if you had more control over customising your deck (and if the CPU didn't seem to always pull the card it desperately needed... hmmm), but this is a great starting point for non-fans.

Steve Burns

VERDICT

Far more interesting than it first appears, *Planeswalkers 2012* is an accessible start for players looking to get into the phenomenon. Experienced players might bemoan the lack of customisation options but this is still a worthy use of your time.

70%



DETAILS

Publisher Sega
Developer Sumo Digital
Release Date Out now
Price £6.29
Players 1-6
Genre Racing
Website <http://bit.ly/oDFKkH>
Twitter @sega
Facebook <http://on.fb.me/n00NiD>

Sega Rally Online Arcade

Very long hard easy right left jump maybe

A MIXTURE OF the last console release of *Sega Rally* and the arcade-only *Sega Rally 3*, *Online Arcade* combines the art assets of the former with... well, the rest of the game from the latter – with mixed results.

As it is very much an arcadey arcade title hailing from the arcades you young whippersnappers probably missed the heyday of, it might surprise you that you see a game over screen for winning. That's neither here nor there, it's just an arcade peculiarity we thought necessary to point out.

The game proper, when it's not showing you a screen normally reserved for failure even though you've just won, is simple, shallow racing fun.

Handling verges on the ridiculous – not in an entirely bad way – side of things, and races rarely go over the few minutes mark.

The single-player mode is a decent distraction, but multiplayer is where the main draw is, with up to six players rallying it out to see who becomes rally champion of the universe, or something.

It's a shame online is flaky at best – when it works, it's great fun. When it doesn't, it ends up being a constant loop of being sent back to lobbies, kicked out of games and trying to re-enter games that no longer exist. For a game with 'Online' in its title, you would expect better.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Throwaway single-player and a sometimes dodgy online experience stop this from being a good arcade racer. On the other hand, it is fun and sinking 20 minutes or so here and there into it is often a laugh – plus it's quite cheap.

74%



DETAILS

Publisher Doctor Entertainment
Developer Doctor Entertainment
Release Date Out now
Price £9.99
Players 1
Genre Puzzle
Website www.puzzle-dimension.com
Twitter NA
Facebook <http://on.fb.me/pXoQ93>

Puzzle Dimension

FUN FACT: TETRIS is still the best puzzle game ever made. This is 100 per cent the truth, and if you disagree then we'll fight you. *Puzzle Dimension* isn't in any danger of challenging for the throne, but that's not to say it isn't a damn fine puzzler.

Developed by some of the team behind similar PSone puzzler *Kula World*, you'll be spending your time negotiating a ball through a series of increasingly fiendish floating levels. Scoring the all-important flowers you need to open the escape portal is easy at first, but soon you'll have to overcome gravity, blocks with different properties and your own terrible grasp of spatial awareness to get even close to making it. Addictive like crack-coated Pringles, this should be a serious consideration for your next purchase.

Steve Burns

81%



DETAILS

Publisher Rockstar
Developer Team Bondi
Release Date Out now
Price £6.99
Players 1
Genre Action
Website www.rockstargames.com
Twitter @RockstarGames
Facebook <http://on.fb.me/qlfMsQ>

L.A. Noire Rockstar Pass

IT'S WEIRD REVIEWING a 'get your DLC cheaper' pass so consider this a review of all the *L.A. Noire* DLC instead. "But how?" you cry, confused. "How can you review the wide spectrum of diverse gameplay within the *L.A. Noire* universe?" As the bitchy fake question setup answers, fairly easily. The DLC really does serve up more slices of the game itself. 'The Chicago Piano', which is free DLC anyway, is a fun but standard case. 'A Slip Of The Tongue' is fun but standard. 'Nicholson Electroplating'? Go on, guess. If you want more *L.A. Noire*, then this hits the spot. Nothing more, nothing less.

Ryan King

80%

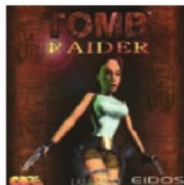
UNDER THE INFLUENCE... The games that changed it all



There are few game characters as instantly recognisable as Lara Croft.



Apparently Lara's large boobs were the result of a design accident that the horny designers decided to keep in.



Tomb Raider

• Release date Oct 1996 • Publisher Eidos Interactive • Developer Core Design
• Games it influenced Uncharted: Drake's Fortune, Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver

IN 1996 TWO games were released that changed videogames forever, and there's not even a hint of hyperbole to be found in that comment. On 23 June Nintendo's *Super Mario 64* hit store shelves and it was nothing less than a revelation, blasting gamers into the world of 3D and displaying just what was possible with the new generation of hardware.

What Tomb Raider did was give an early indication that videogaming didn't just have to imitate cinema

Later in the year a new character made her way onto the gaming scene, further defining and evolving what was possible in this brave new dimension. It was, of course, Lara Croft.

We could wax lyrical about how the choice by lead graphic artist Toby Gard to make Lara a sassy female adventurer rather than a generic Indiana Jones rip-off not only cemented *Tomb Raider*'s success but also saw videogaming at large finally penetrate the mainstream, but we want to talk about the *game* here, not its protagonist.

What *Tomb Raider* did was give an early indication that videogaming didn't just have to imitate cinema, but that it also had the potential to confidently stand next to it. We've reached

the culmination of that nascent promise with this year's *Uncharted 3* – a game that looks as entertaining, if not more so, than any of the big cinema releases this year. But it was *Tomb Raider* that started it all.

The 3D environments; the focus on story as well as gameplay; the combat and exploration and navigation. All of it was so well put together and presented through visuals that were, for the time, absolutely astonishing. You could even argue that it was *Tomb Raider* that introduced the set piece – the fight with the Tyrannosaurus rex in the game's

opening level feeling less akin to a simple boss battle and more like a spectacle to be wowed by.

With PlayStation's introduction of compact discs to gaming Sony provided the capacity for devs to make something special. Core Design and *Tomb Raider* delivered on it, creating a worldwide sensation that would come to inform every third-person action adventure released from then on.

WHAT WE SAID: Issue 14 • 94%

"Core could have been lazy and knocked out a pretty standard maze game, but instead it has taken the bull by the horns and produced something that can truly be called revolutionary. *Tomb Raider* rarely puts a foot wrong."

YOU NEVER PLAYED THIS



Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee deserves a chance from the COD generation.



Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee

- Release date September 1997
- Publisher GT Interactive • Developer Oddworld Inhabitants

ASK ANY COCKY little whippersnapper about *Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee* these days and they'll probably think you're talking about a 3D platformer or a Western-inspired FPS. Actually, scratch that. They wouldn't even know about *Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee* or *Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath*. They'd probably think you said 'CODworld' and assume it's the latest *Call Of Duty*.

The reason for this is because cocky little whippersnappers are idiots who know nothing and could do with a sharp kick up the backside. If any such whippersnappers are reading this, allow us to enlighten you. *Abe's Oddysee* was a fantastic action-platformer in the same vein as *Another World* or *Flashback*, and it contained more imagination in one pixel on Abe's strange, spotty forehead than Captain Price has in his entire moustache.

In the game Abe is a Mudokon slave, working at the Rupture Farms meat-processing factory on Oddworld. When he discovers his friends face death at the hands of their master he decides to escape and save as many of his buddies as he can along the way.

It was funny, inventive, looked fantastic and was actually quite ahead of its time, featuring such then-innovations as a complete lack of a HUD (information was conveyed through the world) and an AI system that allowed you to order your fellow Mudokons about.

Compared to *COD*, whose 'innovations' usually consist of bigger explosions and shooting civilians, *Abe's Oddysee* was a fantastic piece of work in its time. So, cocky little whippersnappers: it's on PSN for just a few pounds – PLAY IT.



WE COULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT ...

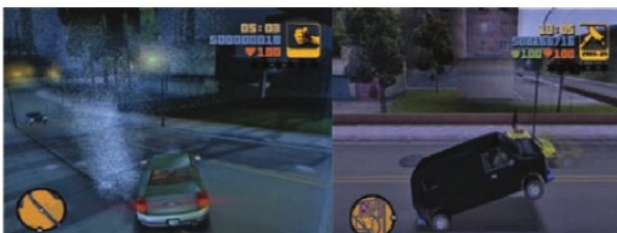
The Sopranos: Road To Respect

EVEN IF YOU'RE such a die-hard *Sopranos* fan that you've actually started your own criminal organisation and begun speaking in an Italian-American accent you will find nothing to enjoy in this pointless, frustrating, unbearable excuse for a game. If it were a person it would have been whacked by the mob. As described by us in issue 150, this game is "the shittiest pile of shitty ol' shit we've had the tearful misfortune of playing." It's so bad we can't even be bothered finishing this sente...



CARS ACCORDING TO PLAYSTATION

IF GTA TAUGHT us anything – and believe us, it's taught us a lot – it's that our car can take constant punishment and do thousands of sweet jumps before going on fire and blowing up. We crashed into one tree and our engine fell out. PlayStation LIES.



RETRO GAMES WE SAID WE WANT TO PLAY AGAIN BUT PROBABLY WON'T



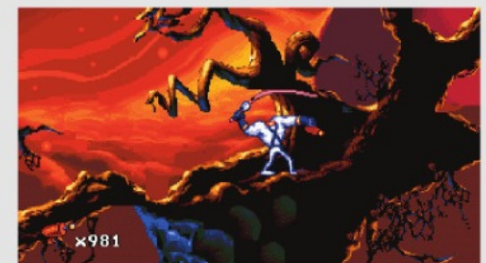
Dino Crisis

A SURVIVAL-HORROR GAME with dinosaurs? Who wouldn't want to play that? Well, turns out it's us actually. Dinosaurs aren't that exciting any more. We probably wouldn't even blink if we saw a velociraptor wandering out of H&M.



Doom

IT CHANGED EVERYTHING! It set the template for the most popular gaming genre! It introduced game mechanics that were destined to be copied by developers the world over! But you can't look up or down. No thanks.



Earthworm Jim 2

WE PUT EARTHWORM *Jim 2* here for two reasons: one, because we don't want to play it. Two, because we want to sing the cartoon theme song: "Earthworm Jim, he's such a groovy guy! Earthworm Jim, he rockets through the sky!"



Grand Theft Auto: London

"CRUISIN' THROUGH THE universe, having lots of fun, here comes Earthworm Jim you know that he's the mighty one!" Oh... ahem. Got a bit carried away with the *Earthworm Jim* tune there. Erm... we wouldn't play *GTA: London* either kthxbye.



BECOME A BLACK OPS PRO (BY BLACK OPS PROS)

Tired of getting your ass kicked by the seemingly endless hordes of campers, snipers and AK-74-ers that litter the servers of your favourite shooter? Of course you are. Which is why Play did the right thing and rounded up two of the very best *Call Of Duty* players on the planet, Jaiy 'iNoSurrender' Pirie and Aaron 'PwR GaGa' Storey, to give you the inside scoop on everything from weapon setups to Perks. We're good to you, you know?



PERKS

Picking the right Perks is fundamental to success in *Black Ops*. So why is it so infuriatingly difficult to find the right balance? Is there a 'right' balance?

We don't know. We're just mere mortals. These guys however...

"As first Perk I usually use Flak Jacket Pro as it prevents so many deaths from claymores and frags," iNoSurrender tells us. "Second Perk I usually use Sleight of Hand Pro as it is useful in close-combat situations, and third Perk is usually Ninja Pro for me because it gives you an advantage against people who don't use it as you can hear them but they can't hear you."



PwR GaGa agrees with that selection. "Perks depend entirely on what player you are. I use Either Flak Jacket, Sleight of Hand, and just incase anybody thinks they're going to hear me running I've got Ninja.

"Perks can also vary for the game type. I like to use Flak Jacket which takes less explosive damage and is especially effective when capturing the HQ in Headquarters as the grenade spam comes from the opposing team. Sleight of Hand is essential. When you first use the Perk it's only faster reloading. Now upgrade it to the Pro status for 3,000 COD points and you'll be aiming down your sights faster than the opposing team. It's always nice to have the upper hand, right? Now the last of the Perks... Ninja! This is a Perk worth having! If you're a sneaky one, trying to get around the back of the opposing team, this is for you! Ninja makes you silent! Just remember, you're not invisible so stay out of sight!"

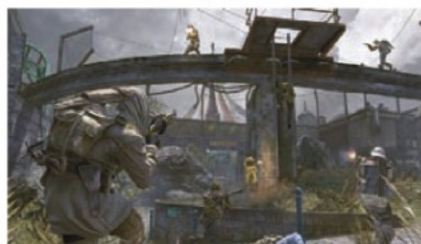


TACTICS

So you've got the right weapons, the right Perks, the right Killstreaks. So what? All of that means nothing if you haven't got the right tactics. Take it away boys...

"I just think that if you move in groups then you will be successful," iNoSurrender tells us. "With a group of you running around you can overpower your opponents. If you decide to move away from your team then it is important that you use the Ghost Perk and a silencer on your gun. This way you can sneak up on your opponents and get some kills."

"All maps have things called Advantage points and Chokepoints," adds GaGa. "Generally Advantage points will overlook



the Chokepoint, the Chokepoint having minimal cover while the Advantage point has maximum cover. Take Firing Range, for example, if you spawn at the gates next to the toilet run dead ahead to the wooden house, more commonly known as 'Wood'. Run to the top where you'll have sandbags which no bullets can get through, giving you maximum cover as you perch over to pick off the opposing team with the middle of the map being the Chokepoint."

Communication with your team is, according to iNoSurrender, just as important as being able to fire the gun.

"When I'm playing as a team the most important thing is communication," he tells us. "Make sure every member of your team has a mic and talk about what you are going to do. If you can get a group of friends together who can all communicate with each other then you will find it hard to lose as your team-mates help each other out. Talk about strategies such as if you are going to rush a bomb or sit back and pick off the other team."



KILLSTREAKS

Love 'em or hate 'em, Killstreaks are as integral to *Call of Duty* life as cake is to fat kids. Let's see what the pros make of *Black Ops'* death-dealing rewards...

"I am more of a team player so I use UAV, Counter-UAV and Blackbird as my Killstreaks as I am competitive and like to win," iNoSurrender asserts. "And these Killstreaks help my team-mates as well."

PwR GaGa goes into more detail. "I personally like to use three (UAV), eight (Blackbird) and 11 (dogs). [With the] UAV, knowing where the enemy is a huge advantage. There's nothing more frustrating than being shot in the back!"

"The Blackbird is basically the upgraded version of the UAV, in that it shows you constantly where the opposing team are and what direction they're facing. 11 is for Attack Dogs, these

are the bad boys for racking up those most important kills."

Sounds easy, right? But what about the players that have trouble getting the higher numbers of kills required for the more exotic Killstreaks?

"The most obvious way to build up a Killstreak is to camp, and camp hard!" is GaGa's advice. "However, I like to work around an area where I can see where my enemies will come from without worrying about my backside!"

"The UAV Killstreak at three kills is very effective, as it helps your team and makes sure nobody gets behind you. Another tactic used is rushing, this is the more risky tactic but the rewards are bountiful when pulled off."

"You will need the Lightweight Perk alongside the Marathon Pro Perk. Any



second Perk will do, but I prefer to use my favourite – Sleight of Hand. Now these three Perks and any submachine gun will do the trick. Now simply run straight around the outside of the map and catch the enemy unaware!"

"If I am playing for a high kill/death ratio then I usually use Blackbird, Chopper Gunner, Dogs," adds iNoSurrender.

"To get these Killstreaks I sit back with a powerful gun, such as an M16, and pick off the other team. Once you get your Blackbird it's easy as you can see where the enemy are. It is important to watch your back and keep an eye on your radar."



WEAPONS, CLASSES & GAME TYPES

Whether you're a camper or a rusher, having the right weapon to hand is the difference between life and death. Here, our pros run down which weapons and equipment they take onto the battlefield and why.

"It is definitely better to have different classes for different game modes, in the

same way Perks change with games modes," states PwR GaGa. "The same applies to weapons. For quick objective games like Capture The Flag, which is really quick end-to-end stuff at times, I like to have the MP5K along with the Marathon Pro Perk. This allows you to run fast and never stop."



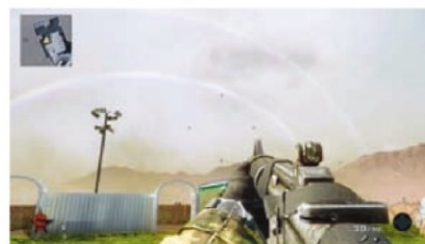
"For Team Deathmatch I use the M16 as this is the best slaying weapon for camping back with, as you can rack up those kills and get that all important high kill/death ratio. For every other game type, like Sabotage, Demolition and Headquarters I like to use the AK-47. This is a generally slow rate of fire weapon compared to other assault rifles, however, the damage and bullet penetration allows me to shoot players through walls that usually would get away."

Unsurprisingly, iNoSurrender also uses different classes when rotating through the maps. "I like to use MP5K with extended mags for close-quarter-style maps, such as Stadium, Firing Range and Nuketown, as most action happens in the buildings, therefore the MP5K is perfect for these kinds of maps with its good firing rate and damage."

"For maps such as Array and Grid which have wide open areas I prefer to use Famas with Red Dot Sight or M16 With Red Dot Sight. These weapons allow you to sit back and pick off your opponents. This will also give you less deaths."

Both players also agree on which secondary weapon is the most useful. "I always use a Python as my secondary weapon as it is very powerful and comes in useful when you run out of ammo or don't have time to reload," says iNoSurrender. GaGa agrees.

"My secondary has to be the Python. This high-power revolver can kill with two hits, making it deadly when I don't have time to reload the AK-47! The attachment I use for this is the speed reloader, making it quick and simple to reload."





Sucker Punch

PRICE: £13.99 **SOUND:** TBC **DIRECTOR:** Zack Snyder
STARRING: Emily Browning, Vanessa Hudgens, Abbie Cornish

YOU COULD ARGUE that Zack Snyder's *300* was sexist – it featured a bunch of men running about in their pants and flashing a lot of flesh. But there's something far creepier about it when it's young girls wearing skirts so short they barely cover their bottoms. In *Sucker Punch* – in which Babydoll escapes the reality of her confinement in a mental asylum

by imagining herself fighting giant samurai and steampunk Nazi-robots – you can almost imagine Snyder panting behind the camera as he puts his female cast in skimpy outfits. And the film that surrounds this peep show is too reliant on special effects and too boring to make a solid case for its existence beyond flashy titillation.

RATING: ★★☆☆☆



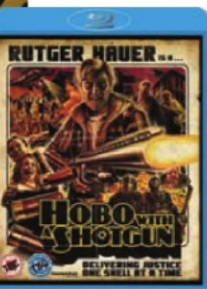
Scream 4

PRICE: £15.99 **SOUND:** DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 **DIRECTOR:** Wes Craven
STARRING: Neve Campbell, Courteney Cox, David Arquette

IF SCREAM 4'S motto is "the unexpected is the new cliché" then it certainly kicks off playing by these new rules. The opening five minutes play on audience expectations with the same self-referential postmodernist humour that made the original *Scream* such a success. Unfortunately, it's all downhill from there, director Wes Craven failing to play on the tropes of modern horror

and instead making a movie that's as generic and predictable as the films it puts down. Torture porn is, whether you like it or not, the new horror, and watching a man in a mask knife his victims, however ironically intended, simply isn't thrilling in this day and age. As such *Scream 4* feels like the worst kind of horror – one that doesn't actually contain any horror.

RATING: ★★☆☆☆



Hobo With A Shotgun

PRICE: £11.99 **SOUND:** TBC **DIRECTOR:** Jason Eisener **STARRING:** Rutger Hauer, Molly Dunsworth, Brian Downey

IF IT WEREN'T for the tremendous on-screen presence of Rutger Hauer then you could probably knock a star off the end of this review. A blood-soaked homage to the vigilante grindhouse movies of the Seventies, *Hobo With A Shotgun* is at once garish, fun and irreverent, but also gory, gratuitous and shocking, and not always in an ultraviolent comic book kind of way. One scene in which a bus full of young

children are burnt alive shows just how far the filmmakers are willing to go to demonise their villains. But Hauer is there at the centre of it all, enjoying the hell out of himself in a ridiculous role and blasting skulls one shell at a time. It's outrageous, trashy, and lurid stuff, but in Grindhouse filmmaking they're probably the three biggest compliments we could give it.

RATING: ★★☆☆☆



There's something very videogamey about *Source Code*. One scene was actually inspired by the way Niko Bellic jumps out of cars in *GTA IV*.

Source Code

[function]run:(suprisingly.good.movie):://



PRICE: £15.99 **SOUND:** DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 **DIRECTOR:** Duncan Jones
STARRING: Jake Gyllenhaal, Michelle Monaghan, Vera Farmiga

THE trouble with films like *Source Code* is they take a lot of time to explain – the kind-of-similar-but-not-really *Inception* had

to devote the whole *first hour* of its running time to exposition. *Source Code* is actually a lot better at unravelling its complex and perplexing plot than Christopher Nolan's film, drip-feeding the rationalisation of its narrative throughout rather than stacking it at the front end like a videogame tutorial. But that doesn't make it any less of a metaphysical nightmare.

The *Source Code* is a program that allows the participant to relive the last eight minutes of someone's life – a program into which US Army helicopter pilot Colter Stevens (Gyllenhaal) has become a non-consenting inductee. Suffering short-term memory loss he awakes confused and disoriented on a train, but more worryingly, in someone else's body. He must relive the same eight minutes of that man's life over and over, each cycle ending with an explosion, tasked with finding the identity of the terrorist attack's perpetrator (while also trying to piece together his own fragmented psyche).

Oh, and he keeps appearing in what appears to be a wrecked military aircraft (or is it?) each time he dies in the explosion, where he's given orders by a mysterious Air Force captain. Phew.

Source Code feels part *Groundhog Day*, part *Murder On The Orient Express* and part *Quantum Leap* (something the film is very aware

of considering a bit of cameo casting near the end). There's also a hint of Tony Scott's *Déjà Vu*, *Source Code* sharing more with that director's glitzy filmmaking than the atmospheric output of his brother's Seventies and Eighties sci-fi outings.

But like Ridley Scott, director Duncan Jones manages to find a human story within the quantum-physics babble of *Source Code*'s sci-fi. It's an aspect of the film that works until its final moments, at which point the plot buckles and science gives way to sentimentalism and magic. It detracts from whatever vague sense of credibility the film held onto up until that point.

Still, you'll forgive the preposterousness thanks to the great action, well-pitched comedy and scenes of genuinely touching sentiment. There really is a lot going on here; unexpectedly, but robustly, held together by an exercise in fractured storytelling. Like Christopher Nolan, who explored similar forms in *Memento*, director Duncan Jones has proven his ability to step up to more commercial filmmaking while still retaining his reputation as an intelligent filmmaker. We can't wait to see what he does next.

Chris McMahon

VERDICT

Source Code is more extroverted than the minimalist paranoia of Duncan Jones's last film, *Moon*, but it's a positive step. Let's hope Jones keeps up the momentum and doesn't go down the same disappointing path as *M* Night Shyamalan and Richard Kelly.

RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Movies that should be videogames



❗ We can't imagine any developer being able to do *The Dude* justice in a *Big Lebowski* videogame.

THE BIG LEBOWSKI

SUGGESTING THAT THE Coen brothers' greatest comedy be turned into a videogame will likely be considered sacrilege by anyone who's seen and enjoyed the movie, but hear us out. We're not suggesting that The Dude is turned into some kind of Zen ninja-monk who fights nihilists with a bowling ball and powers up with a White Russian. No, we

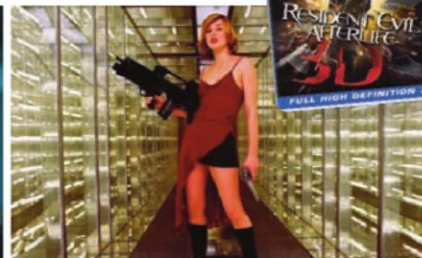
think the setup would work quite well as a point-and-click adventure.

The film shares a lot with the genre – a social outcast as the lead; a detective story surrounding a MacGuffin; a cast of ridiculous characters; and a genuinely funny script. It just works. You can almost imagine the hand-drawn animation in the style of *Sam & Max Hit The Road*.

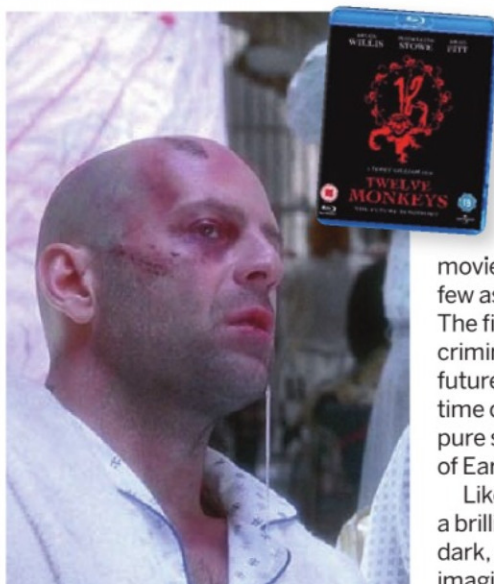
Quick disclaimer: we're those people who think turning *The Big Lebowski* into a videogame would be tantamount to blasphemy. We had to write something here because that's what we're paid to do. If anyone attempts to defile *The Big Lebowski* and make this game we will find them and cut off their johnson. Or just put a marmot in their bath.

Terrible videogame movie of the month

NO, PAUL WS ANDERSON. Just... no. Stop it now. You've done enough.



Classic Blu-ray Fantastic Blu-rays you need to have in your collection



#7 Twelve Monkeys

Price: £8.99 **Sound:** DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 **Director:** Terry Gilliam **Starring:** Bruce Willis, Brad Pitt, Madeleine Stowe

HAVING WATCHED SOURCE Code this month we started thinking about other time-travel movies we've enjoyed, and there are few as beautiful as *Twelve Monkeys*. The film sees James Cole, a convicted criminal living in a post-apocalyptic future, repeatedly sent back through time on dangerous missions to obtain a pure sample of the virus that killed most of Earth's population.

Like many of Terry Gilliam's films it's a brilliant but underrated piece of work; dark, atmospheric and oppressive, but imaginative and moving. The more Cole

is yanked between different timelines the more he begins to fall apart, and the more his nightmares of a death at an airport come into terrible focus.

There's something depressing yet beautiful both in the plot of *Twelve Monkeys* and the style in which Gilliam frames the narrative. For a time-travel film to engender feelings of poignancy and desperation was very rare at the time – in the mid-Nineties most were concerned with murderous future-robots. As such, *Twelve Monkeys* felt a refreshing and accomplished take on contemporary sci-fi.

Movie locations we'd love to visit in games



Mars, Total Recall

THERE WAS A *Total Recall* game released on the NES in 1990 but that was a complete and utter waste of electricity. No, we want a proper next-gen re-creation of the Pyramid Mine, Venusville and three-breasted mutant women. Also, this song: <http://bit.ly/iCHyN>



The Overlook Hotel, The Shining

IF YOU'VE PLAYED indie title *Amnesia: The Dark Descent* you'll know just how scary games can be. We'd love the developer, Frictional Games, to make a similar game but set in *The Shining's* Overlook Hotel. That would be effing scary...



The Bathhouse, Spirited Away

SPIRITED AWAY TAKES place in a breathtakingly colourful and vibrant place. There are very few games in this day and age set in worlds as unique and original as those created in the mind of Hayao Miyazaki.



The Dreamworld, Inception

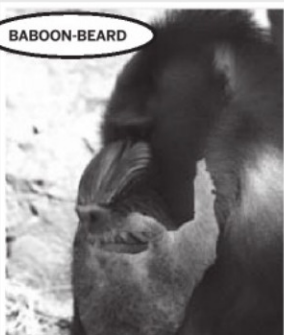
WE'LL PROBABLY GET to experience this in a few years as Christopher Nolan has confirmed that there is an *Inception* game in development. Hopefully we'll be able to turn entire cities inside out, or turn all the roads and pavements into trampolines... the possibilities are endless.

PLAY#x Playlist

If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

GAME UNDER

Stock photography, fictitious stories, real lives...



PS3 LISTING

game	issue	score
3D Collection	195	75%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Alice: Madness Returns	207	57%
Aliens Vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Arcana Heart 3	207	79%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Ar Tonelico Qoga: Knell Of Ar Ciel	203	27%
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	91%
More than enough additions to take the Assassin's Creed formula into modern classic territory.		
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	77%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Single-player is fairly impressive but take it online and it's bordering on genius. This is quite possibly the best shooter on PS3 today.		
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The most over-the-top, inventive, consistently thrilling, overtly sexual, guiltily enjoyable Japanese action game we've played in years.		
Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	161	61%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	94%
With its diverse roster, stunning visuals and furiously paced gameplay, Continuum Shift is a must-have for beat-'em-up fans.		
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blur	193	86%
Borderlands	185	80%
Brink	206	67%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Bulletstorm	203	86%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	94%
Treyarch's first genuinely brilliant entry to the series and a standard-bearer for fast-paced online shooters.		
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%

game	issue	score
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	85%
Catherine*	204	48%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Crysis 2	204	72%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
Colin McRae: DiRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Create	199	71%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Damnation	181	38%
Dance Dance Revolution	201	52%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
DC Universe Online	202	80%
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	201	92%
The point where the Dead Space series stepped up and became something to be genuinely excited about.		
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	199	72%
Demon's Souls	193	92%
As good as it was when we reviewed it on import, but with a better translation and it's also available here. One of PS3's best games.		
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
DiRT 3	206	85%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%
It's just like playing Guitar Hero for the first time all over again, although DJ Hero is slightly more expensive.		
DJ Hero 2	198	88%
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Age II	203	86%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Duke Nukem Forever	207	33%
Dungeon Siege III	206	80%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Dynasty Warriors 7	204	32%
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	178	38%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	83%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
EyePet: Move	197	84%
F1 2010	197	86%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fallout 3 lives up to its promise and then some. It's a damning portrayal of the consequences of war, and a compelling RPG experience.		

game	issue	score
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	171	87%
FIFA 10	184	90%
FIFA 11	197	91%
FIFA continues to improve and continues to dominate with this latest addition to the superior footy franchise.		
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
FIFA World Cup 2010	192	70%
Fight Night Champion	203	88%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	151	69%
G-Force	183	59%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
Two of the greatest PS2 action games of all time come together at a bargain price. Essential purchase.		
God Of War III	190	88%
Gran Turismo 5	200	85%
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
Two fine expansions bundled together and without the need for GTA IV to play them. What more could you want.		
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero III is another great rhythm-action beast, sure to delight fans and newcomers alike. So, grab a guitar and rock out!		
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	197	71%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1	200	21%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter: The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
It will certainly split opinion, but we absolutely love it. A valuable addition to the wonderful world of gaming.		
Heavy Rain: Move Edition	198	70%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Homefront	203	69%
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	207	59%
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	21%
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
inFamous	180	81%
inFamous 2	207	83%
International Cricket 2010	194	61%

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

game	issue	score
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	193	50%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	63%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
John Daly's ProStroke Golf	197	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	71%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	176	93%
 Sony has proven that it has a PlayStation platform capable of supporting a truly world-class FPS. Best graphics ever.		
Killzone 3	202	80%
Knights Contract	202	53%
Kung Fu Panda 2	207	20%
Kung Fu Rider	196	65%
Lair	158	52%
L.A. Noire	206	91%
 Not perfect but Rockstar's new IP introduces pioneering facial-capture technology and interesting gameplay.		
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	79%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	206	76%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
LittleBigPlanet 2	201	96%
 An amazing game and something to get involved with even if you can't create your own stuff.		
Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	60%
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
LOTR: Conquest	175	52%
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden NFL 08	157	82%
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
Madden NFL 11	196	84%
Mafia II	196	81%
MAG	189	68%
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	72%
Marvel Vs Capcom 3	202	88%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Mass Effect 2	201	97%
 Why the hell are you reading this when you should be playing Mass Effect 2 instead? GO GO GO.		
Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
 Not the final Metal Gear Solid game after all then. Still brilliant though, and still largely incomprehensible.		
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
 A questionable single-player mode is rendered null and void by the best multiplayer we've ever played.		

Duke Nukem Forever PS3	33%
inFamous 2 PS3	83%
Alice: Madness Returns PS3	57%
Hunted: The Demon's Forge PS3	59%
Shadows Of The Damned PS3	79%
Red Faction: Armageddon PS3	62%
White Knight Chronicles II PS3	49%
Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition PS3	88%
Kung Fu Panda 2 PS3	20%
Arcana Heart 3 PS3	79%

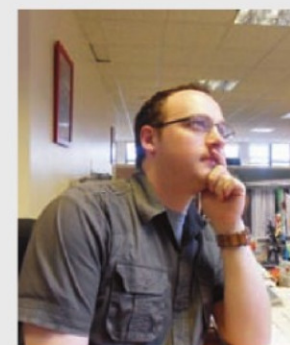
Beyond Good & Evil HD PSN	86%
Gatling Gears PSN	62%
Under Siege PSN	71%
Cubixx HD PSN	76%
Armageddon Riders PSN	65%

game	issue	score
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	58%
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mindjack	202	38%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
 The best kart racer by far on the PlayStation 3, but combined with incredible levels of creativity. If you love LBP you'll love this, too.		
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat	205	81%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 08	172	65%
MotoGP 09/10	190	77%
Moto GP 10/11	204	64%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	76%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
MX Vs ATV: Alive	206	42%
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX Vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
nail'd	201	61%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
NASCAR 08	157	38%
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA 07	153	33%
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	172	71%
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA 2K11	199	82%
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Live 08	158	59%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	199	91%
 Hot Pursuit is one of the best arcade racers of all time - pure, unadulterated bliss in game form.		
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
Nier	192	54%
NHL 2K7	151	80%
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	186	70%
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	184	85%
NHL 11	198	89%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	89%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	205	75%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
PES 2008	159	70%
PES 2009	172	80%
PES 2010	185	72%
PES 2011	197	73%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	54%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Portal 2	205	95%
 Another exceptional realisation from Valve, gamers are going to be talking about Portal 2 for a long time to come.		
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	200	88%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Pure	171	80%

game	issue	score
Pure Football	194	69%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	197	29%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Racket Sports	198	37%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Rango	203	54%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Red Dead Redemption	193	92%
 Relocates the familiar GTA formula to a superbly realised new setting and, in many ways, is unlike anything else as a result.		
Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare	199	87%
Red Faction: Armageddon	207	62%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition	190	86%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
 With its impressive set pieces and glorious multiplayer mode, Resistance 2 is one of the best FPSs on the PS3.		
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%
 With the incredible tracklist, tweaked engine, and new modes, this is easily the best rhythm-action game currently available.		
Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
R.U.S.E.	197	82%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	198	36%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 08	172	55%
SBK 2011	206	70%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	158	92%
 Simply the best rally game on the PS3. Unless simulation is your bag then you'll want to go for Colin McRae. Not much in it, really.		
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	198	76%
Shadows Of The Damned	207	79%
Shaun White Skateboarding	198	70%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
ShellShock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
Simpsons Game	160	82%
SingStar	159	80%
SingStar Guitar	199	70%
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%
Singularity	195	80%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior	206	45%
SOCOM: Special Forces	205	63%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Soul Calibur IV	169	94%
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	197	69%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%

*denotes import review

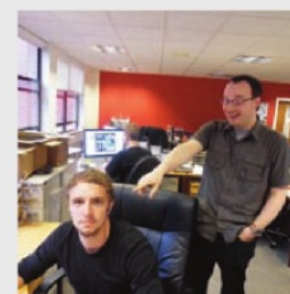
PLAY'S DIARY



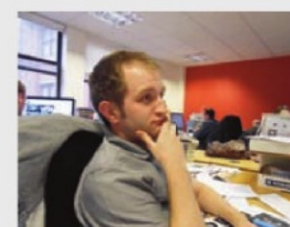
DAY 6: Jon, now comfortable in his role as Ryan's second in command, decides to spread his wings a little by taking up storm chasing. Obviously. Apparently "the lure of deputy editing is alluring, but the alluring lure of chasing a twister is more so. Alluring."



DAY 12: His travels take him far and wide, from Westbourne to Southbourne and back again (though avoiding Boscombe). Each place he visits, he takes detailed notes on weather conditions, prevailing winds, precipitation and what Michael Fish is doing at that point in time.



DAY 18: The realisation hits: Jon is a *bad* storm chaser, having not been able to chase a single storm. Returning to the warm embrace of Play a dejected, laughed at loser, he remembers how to feel good about himself again: by ripping on Chris.



DAY 25: Meanwhile, Super Sub Dan decides his days of rewriting standfirsts into things much less funny and far less libellous could be coming to an end, as he discovers the alluring allure luring him towards the age-old discipline of glass-eating.

Time vs thyme



TIME

What is time? Well, far be it from **Play** to take the reins and advance scientific thinking and reasoning beyond where thousands of years has managed to get it to, but... no, actually, we have no idea. It's an abstract concept, and one that no amount of boob and bum jokes will explain away. What we can say for certain, however, is that it's the great leveller – once enough time has passed, everything that ever is or ever was will no longer be. As such, nothing can outlast it, nothing can overpower or overwhelm it and we will all – eventually – succumb to it. Having said that, time also heals all wounds, is money and gives a greater perspective on events. Basically, even though it doesn't really exist in any way we can reasonably articulate or actually understand, time is the best thing there is (or isn't), as well as the worst.

7/10



THYME

Thyme is quite easily defined – it is a herb of the *Thymus* genus, used in both cooking and medicinal practices and valued across the world for those very uses. When infused with lamb it makes the already-delicious young sheep meat even more delicious, and when put in a soup it makes the soup taste more like thyme. Which is good, if you like thyme. But the most interesting aspect of this crazy herb is its use in medicine – while time heals all wounds, thyme can sort out a sore throat good and proper. And not in any abstract or figurative sense, either. Thymol, a major part of thyme's essential oil, is the main active ingredient in Listerine and thyme tea can be used to help with bronchitis and coughs. Basically, it's the most wondrous thing in the world. Though mainly because it makes lamb so utterly delectable.

Better than coriander/10

game	issue	score
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%
Just beating <i>Blur</i> to the chequered flag, <i>Split/Second</i> is a wonderfully intense racing game in the <i>Burnout</i> mould.		
Sports Champions	196	83%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%
Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition	207	88%
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
The fact that you're buying a lot of stuff you've probably bought already is the only drawback to what is the best fighter ever made.		
Tekken 6	184	94%
There are flaws that hurt the experience, but nothing, <i>nothing</i> , stops <i>Tekken 6</i> from being an intense, tactical and brilliant fighting game.		
Test Drive Unlimited 2	203	62%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
The Club	163	80%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
This proves once and for all that Western RPGs are better than Japanese ones! Sort of. Whatever, <i>Oblivion</i> is an awesome game.		
The Fight	199	42%
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The Orange Box	161	93%
The Saboteur	187	67%
The Shoot	199	76%
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Thor: God Of Thunder	206	38%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	194	60%
Tiger Woods PGA 12: The Masters	204	65%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X.	177	75%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2	196	69%
Tomb Raider Trilogy	204	86%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Top Spin 4	203	60%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll	202	56%
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
TV Superstars	199	53%
Two Worlds II	203	64%
UEFA EURO 2008	165	62%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
<i>Undisputed</i> is gorgeous to look at, it's incredibly deep, and it's one of the most addictive fighters we've played in ages.		

game	issue	score
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
<i>Among Thieves</i> has proven itself to be a real work of class. It's one of the best games in recent years.		
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Vanquish	197	93%
A brilliant surprise from the developer of <i>Bayonetta</i> and easily one of the best games we've played in 2010.		
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	180	80%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Virtua Tennis 4	205	79%
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhawk	157	84%
Warriors: Legends Of Troy	202	14%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
White Knight Chronicles II	207	49%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
World Snooker Championship 2007	151	56%
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship	177	67%
WSC Real 11	204	69%
WWE All Stars	204	82%
WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2008	159	88%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2009	173	74%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2010	185	77%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2011	199	63%
X-Blades	178	54%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	203	79%
Yostar 2: In The Movies	204	60%

PS STORE LISTING



1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
After Burner Climax	193	91%
Classic, frantic and utterly brilliant arcade action from Sega. A fine example of what the company is best known for.		
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Alien Breed: Impact	196	80%
Alien Breed 2: Assault	201	82%
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Aqua Panic	193	68%
Armageddon Riders	207	65%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Beat Sketcher	201	85%
Beyond Good & Evil HD	207	86%
Bishi Bashi Special!	175	61%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	61%
Blacklight: Tango Down	200	64%
Blade Kitten	197	72%
Blast Factor	152	72%
Blokus	202	54%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode I	188	65%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode II	188	61%
Blue Toad Murder Files Episodes 4/5/6	193	70%
Bombberman Ultra	185	82%
Braid	188	93%
We had to wait quite a while, but time is what we have plenty of both with and for <i>Braid</i> . Simply brilliant.		
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%

game	issue	score
Call Of Duty Classic	188	90%
It doesn't have <i>MW2</i> 's polish but it's a great game both as a slice of history and in its own right.		
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Catan	195	85%
Chime Super Deluxe	203	80%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	168	70%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer Red Alert 3 Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Cool Boarders	173	57%
Cool Boarders 2	175	31%
Costume Quest	199	70%
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	174	82%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	170	79%
Crazy Taxi	200	80%
Crescent Pale Mist	200	70%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
This is yet another beautiful, cute and high-class puzzler on the PSN that works perfectly and is a joy to play.		
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Cubixx HD	207	76%
Dark Mist	164	53%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Dead Space: Extraction	203	88%
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
DeathSpank	195	83%
Destruction Derby	01	80%
.detuned	186	50%
Digger HD	186	52%
Diner Dash	190	66%
Driver	171	90%
With the most cinematic car chases ever seen in a game, <i>Driver</i> made a huge impact in 1998. Despite rosey graphics, it's still a playable title.		
Droplitz	184	91%
<i>Droplitz</i> is a superb puzzler that blends <i>Rez</i> -style layers of music, pipes and dials to create one of the most satisfying puzzlers in years.		
Earthworm Jim HD	196	89%
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome II	202	83%
echochrome	169	85%
Elefunk	170	45%
Explodemon	203	70%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	90%
This scrolling-fighter classic from 1989 makes an almost faultless appearance on PSN. Stick it on your download list.		
Final Fantasy IV: The Complete Collection	204	80%
Final Fantasy VII	181	96%
Even after all these years it still holds up. In fact, our mark seems to have gone up 3% since 1997.		
Final Fantasy VIII	190	90%
A truly engaging RPG – if you've never experienced the game before then make sure this is the next thing you download.		
Final Fantasy IX	195	90%
Never gets the love it deserves, but this PSN release gives you the chance to experience Square Enix's refreshing RPG all over again.		
Flight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	179	70%
fIOW	151	90%
Another 90% game for the PS3, another lesson in simple, addictive gameplay. <i>fIOW</i> is an innovative title available on the Network.		
Flower	176	85%
Frogger Returns	190	35%
Funky Lab Rat	201	70%
G-Police	27	84%

game	issue	score
Gatling Gears	207	62%
Geon	175	71%
Go! Puzzle	152	58%
Gran Turismo HD	150	75%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Greed Corp	191	75%
GTI Club+	174	72%
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hamsterball	194	72%
Hardcore 4x4	15	81%
Hasbro Family Game Night	187	60%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
High Velocity Bowling	163	50%
Hi-Octane	178	64%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperballoid HD	188	70%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
International Track & Field	171	80%
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	185	48%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Jet Rider 2	176	71%
Joe Danger	194	96%
Simply put, <i>Joe Danger</i> is one of the best games you'll currently find on the PSN. Buy it. Buy it now.		
Judge Dredd	18	19%
Jumping Flash	172	55%
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Kula World	172	71%
Kung-Fu Live	201	42%
Landit Bandit	195	66%
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	198	90%
Lara is back to her best in <i>The Guardian Of Light</i> . <i>Tomb Raider</i> fans will love it and for just £9.99 everyone else should, too.		
Lead & Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Lemmings	151	79%
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Magic Carpet	179	65%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers	202	84%
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	182	90%
This game has an astonishing amount to offer if you're prepared to plunge into its murky depths.		
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
MediEvil	173	45%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Metal Gear Solid	187	93%
While it looks rather rough now, the game itself remains a real high point in the franchise. Simply essential.		
Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Microbot	202	51%
Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge Special Edition	195	94%
The HD remake of arguably the best game in the <i>Monkey Island</i> series is a more than welcome addition to the PSN.		
Motorhead	173	60%
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
Naruto Shippuden: Kizuna Drive	205	42%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numblast	183	60%
N20	37	70%
Outland	207	72%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	91%
Bold, bright, insanely addictive - this re-imagining of the retro classic is an essential addition to anybody's PSN library.		
Pain	183	69%
Patapon 3	205	81%
Peggle	189	94%
So addictive it should come with some sort of government warning. Terrific value for money and a superb little puzzle game.		

game	issue	score
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
PixelJunk Shooter 2	204	90%
Simply put, <i>Joe Danger</i> is one of the best games you'll currently find on the PSN. Buy it. Buy it now.		
Piyotama	162	62%
Planet Minigolf	196	58%
Polar Panic	190	65%
Populous: The Beginning	46	70%
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Q*bert	58	53%
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	29	77%
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Rayman	01	76%
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Risk: Factions	202	80%
Rocket Knight	194	74%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 1	194	90%
Clever, funny and taxing in all the right ways, we're very happy that the Freelance Police are on PlayStation 3.		
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 2	194	92%
This is even better than the first episode due to the fact it has better puzzles and even funnier dialogue.		
Savage Moon	175	87%
Scott Pilgrim Vs The World	197	77%
Section 8	193	78%
Shank	197	86%
Shatter	183	91%
Sheep	171	78%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	178	55%
Soldner-X 2: Final Prototype	195	70%
Sonic 4: Episode One	199	82%
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Syphon Filter	48	93%
Snakeball	176	92%
Stacking	203	88%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%
Street Skater 2	178	40%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	199	88%
Syphon Filter 3	170	80%
Tales Of Monkey Island	196	91%
Telltale Games' excellent modern addition to the <i>Monkey Island</i> franchise finally sees the light of day on PSN. Go pick it up.		
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken HD	150	80%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tetris	202	84%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Snake meets Pac-Man meets GoogleMaps. <i>The Last Guy</i> is yet another innovative and compelling addition to the PSN's line-up.		
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
The Secret Of Monkey Island Special Edition	195	92%
LucasArts' classic point-and-click adventure gets an HD makeover and will hopefully be the first of many classics heading to PSN.		
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	174	80%
TMNT: Turtles in Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	54	34%
Top Darts	202	71%

game	issue	score
Top Gun	198	53%
Topotai: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	162	31%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Tumble	198	70%
Under Siege	207	71%
Uno	189	85%
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Vandal Hearts: Flames Of Judgment	192	87%
Wakeboarding HD	192	65%
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	171	80%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
WipEout	01	89%
WipEout HD	172	84%
Wolfenstein	181	70%
Worms	179	91%
There's a reason <i>Worms</i> is still going strong, and that's because people never get tired of its fun personality and addictive gameplay.		
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Battle Islands	201	80%
X-Men Arcade	203	60%
Yar's Revenge	206	57%
Zuma	182	78%
A Space Shooter For Two Bucks	202	55%
Alien Havoc	186	68%
Angry Birds	202	93%
Flinging birds at stuff for four times the price of the original in a less-functional fashion than before has never been so much fun.		
Bloons	186	65%
Brainpipe	186	70%
BreakQuest	186	45%
Edge	202	85%
Field Runners	186	85%
Fortix	186	57%
Funky Punch	186	49%
Hero Of Sparta	186	57%
I Must Run!	202	70%
Kahoots	186	88%
NOVA: Near Orbit Vanguard Alliance	202	63%
Pinball Fantasies	186	90%
<i>Pinball Fantasies</i> was originally released on the Amiga and features four tables and some excellent pinball gaming.		
Puzzle Scape	186	75%
Sky Force	202	68%
Tetris	186	93%
How it is possible to make Tetris feel so fresh and so much fun again we don't know, but it's managed here.		
Vempire	186	67%
Who's That Flying?!	202	64%

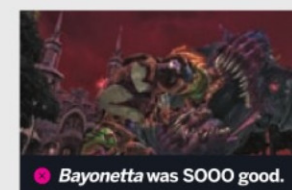
PSP LISTING

300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	147	72%
Ace Combat: Joint Assault	194	79%
After Burner: Black Falcon	152	82%
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%
Ape Academy 2	145	52%
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	190	45%
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	187	77%
Astonishia Story	142	68%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	71%
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	145	45%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Portable	194	84%
Blood Bowl	184	53%
Bomberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	165	69%

YOU RUINED GAMES...

BAYONETTA

PLATINUM GAMES
RELEASED *Bayonetta* to an unsuspecting world back in 2010. Since then, third-person combat-heavy action games have been ruined. And for this we have no one other than the Palin-esque witch herself to blame for it. After all, if she and her game hadn't come about like they did we could have lived on in blissful ignorance.

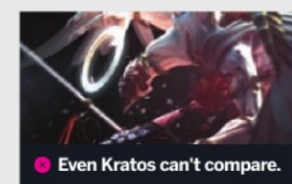


Bayonetta was SOOO good.

But no. Sega had to publish the damnable thing. And since then games like *Dante's Inferno*, *God Of War III*, *Devil May Cry*, *Darksiders* and a host of other (worse) titles just haven't looked the same. Because they were ruined by *Bayonetta*. Whenever a game so much better comes along like this, it just blows away the competition, past, present and future.

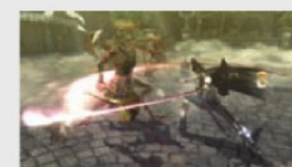


As near to a perfect fighting system as we have ever seen in a game of this ilk, furious pacing, diversity, a complete lack of things that instantly bore you to tears - *Bayonetta* just nailed so, so much it's hard to believe. Then you remember how other games stack up against it and realise it's quite believable. Then you sigh.



Even Kratos can't compare.

So consider this a call to arms for any developer making a game that could be compared to Platinum's ruiner: if you're going to do it, do it right. Don't do it lazily, don't ignore the fundamentals of combat, don't make it a staid and dull experience. Actually take *Bayonetta* on at its own game, then maybe games can be un-ruined.



GARY MCTRUTH'S WORLD OF RECOMMENDATIONS

THIS MONTH: DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

DID YOU ACTUALLY think I'd let this one go by, Play? Did you? Idiots. That's what you are. You have no right to call yourselves 'them people what do know and play about with games and stuff', as you tend to do.



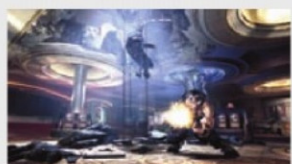
For you see, far from being a waste of space, as you all seem to think, *DNF* is actually a testament to the hard-working spirit and tenacity of human endeavour. Or something like that that actually makes sense.



You all seemed to think its brand of puerile humour that managed to miss the entire point of puerility and humour was anything other than the ultimate satirical attack on all of the sensibilities you hold dear. You poor fools.



And as for the game playing like it was excreted from the rotting carcass of a diseased gibbon? That was *intentional*, you morons. That makes it *better*, you foolish fools. Why I have to explain everything I do not know.



I'm sorry, I don't know what came over me there. I'm not usually this emotional, but this time Play really rubbed me up the wrong way. *Duke Nukem Forever* is brilliant. It is. IT IS. Really, it is. You can trust me.



game	issue	score
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	149	69%
Burnout Dominator	153	65%
Burnout Legends	134	94%
Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	147	80%
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	143	60%
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	137	65%
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	180	32%
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	153	69%
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
Crisis Core – Final Fantasy VII	167	87%
Crush	154	80%
Dante's Inferno	191	76%
Dead Or Alive: Paradise	192	56%
Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness	161	92%
An absolute must-have for RPG fans, and one of the best titles available on the PSP. A simply brilliant game.		
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Dissidia 012 Final Fantasy	203	79%
Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days	190	87%
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	154	68%
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	148	85%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	147	74%
echochrome	169	85%
echoshift	191	73%
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Everybody's Tennis	195	88%
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	138	65%
EyePet	199	77%
F1 2009	187	66%
Field Commander	145	83%
FIFA 06	136	43%
FIFA 07	147	81%
FIFA 11	198	69%
FIFA World Cup 2010	193	65%
Fired Up	134	60%
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Football Manager Handheld 2010	187	60%
Formula One 06	143	78%
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Ghost Recon Predator	200	60%
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	188	55%
Ghostbusters: Sanctum Of Slime	204	51%
Gitaroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Gladiator Begins	206	52%
Go! Sudoku	137	45%
Gods Eater Burst	202	88%
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta	199	79%
Gradius Collection	144	80%
Gran Turismo	184	85%
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	185	95%
Bar some combat control issues, <i>GTA: Chinatown Wars</i> has perfectly translated to the PSP. It's a must-have game.		
GTA: Liberty City Stories	135	95%
GTA: Vice City Stories	147	96%
Half-Minute Hero	191	87%
Hard Corps: Uprising	204	78%
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	136	69%
Hellboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman! What Did I Do To Deserve This?	186	73%
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	181	60%
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	154	70%
International Athletics	170	40%
Invizimals	187	71%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%

*denotes import review

game	issue	score
Juiced: Eliminator	141	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	137	60%
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep	196	88%
Lemmings	138	63%
LittleBigPlanet	186	90%
Refined in certain areas and slightly worse in Create mode but still a fantastic addition to PSP's lineup.		
LocoRoco	143	94%
We called this the definitive PSP title in our review, and it is a game that no PSP owner should be without.		
LocoRoco 2	173	82%
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lord Of Arcana	202	65%
Lumines II	137	74%
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	155	38%
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	147	72%
Medieval Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	145	66%
Metal Slug Anthology	150	91%
Metal Gear Acid 2	138	92%
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker	193	92%
A fantastic entry in the <i>Metal Gear Solid</i> series and one of the best games on PSP. Wonderful.		
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	150	91%
Miami Vice	144	82%
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
Might & Magic: Clash Of Heroes	205	84%
ModNation Racers	193	70%
Monster Hunter Freedom	140	81%
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	181	77%
Moon Diver	205	46%
MotoGP	146	75%
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	184	72%
Mytran Wars	179	85%
Namco Museum Battle Collection	136	68%
Naruto Shippuden Legends	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	169	46%
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	175	57%
No Heroes Allowed	199	69%
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	139	93%
PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	163	86%
Patapon 2	177	87%
Patchwork Heroes	192	85%
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%
PixelJunk Monster Deluxe	185	86%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%
Pocket Racers	144	49%
PoPoLoCroIS	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	145	88%
PQ – Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	138	69%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	194	52%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	181	80%
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	173	54%
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	159	76%
Puzzle Chronicles	190	61%
Puzzle Quest	153	66%
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	156	78%
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Red Faction: Battlegrounds	205	78%
Rengoku 2	144	72%
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%
Ridge Racer 2	145	78%
Ridge Racer	132	91%
Rock Band Unplugged	181	92%
Unplugged comes highly recommended. It's superb – there are few better rhythm-action games on the handheld.		
Rocky Balboa	150	68%

game	issue	score
Secret Agent Clank	169	79%
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%
Sega Rally	158	90%
Very nearly as good as its PlayStation 3 counterpart. Which is a good thing because that's the best rally game money can buy.		
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 3 Portable	206	78%
Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	160	87%
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	190	52%
Slam Bolt Scrappers	204	73%
Smash Court Tennis	154	58%
SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3	190	71%
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	140	69%
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	162	35%
Soul Calibur: Broken Destiny	183	92%
New modes and characters keep things interesting, while fights are as hectic and solid as ever.		
Spider-Man 3	162	32%
Spinout	149	81%
Splinter Cell: Essentials	139	71%
Split/Second: Velocity	200	71%
SSX On Tour	138	76%
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	178	78%
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	148	59%
Star Wars Battlefront II	137	74%
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	187	65%
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	148	69%
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	160	78%
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	138	70%
Street Riders	140	29%
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	142	54%
Swarm	204	78%
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	140	90%
Tekken 6	187	90%
Fantastic to look at and fast and fluid to play. <i>Tekken 6</i> is the best game of the series on PSP.		
Tekken: Dark Resurrection	143	92%
Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together	202	81%
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	146	51%
The 3rd Birthday	203	80%
The Con	153	59%
The Cube	153	64%
The Eye Of Judgment: Legends	191	57%
The Godfather Mob Wars	136	66%
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
The Sims 2	137	71%
TNA Impact! Cross The Line	189	58%
TOCA 3	152	70%
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	156	81%
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	134	54%
UFC Undisputed 2010	197	80%
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	145	88%
Undead Knights	189	46%
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	140	59%
Valhalla Knights	158	49%
Valkyria Chronicles 2	196	87%
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	140	82%
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	161	70%
What Did I Do To Deserve This My Lord!? 2	192	78%
WipEout Pure	159	86%
WipEout Pure	138	91%
Exceeding all of our expectations as to what a handheld <i>WipEout</i> game could be. <i>Pure</i> is an essential PSP purchase.		
World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	141	67%
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	157	80%
WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 2007	147	80%
World Rally Championship	134	67%

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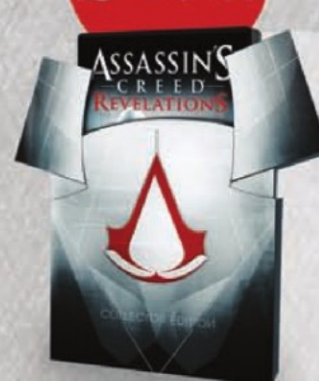
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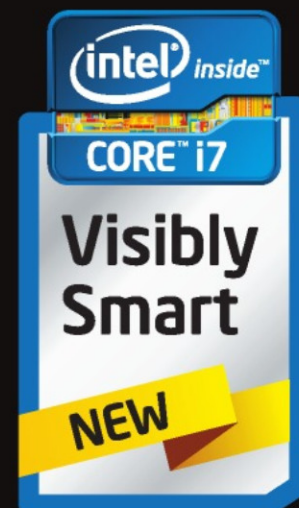


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